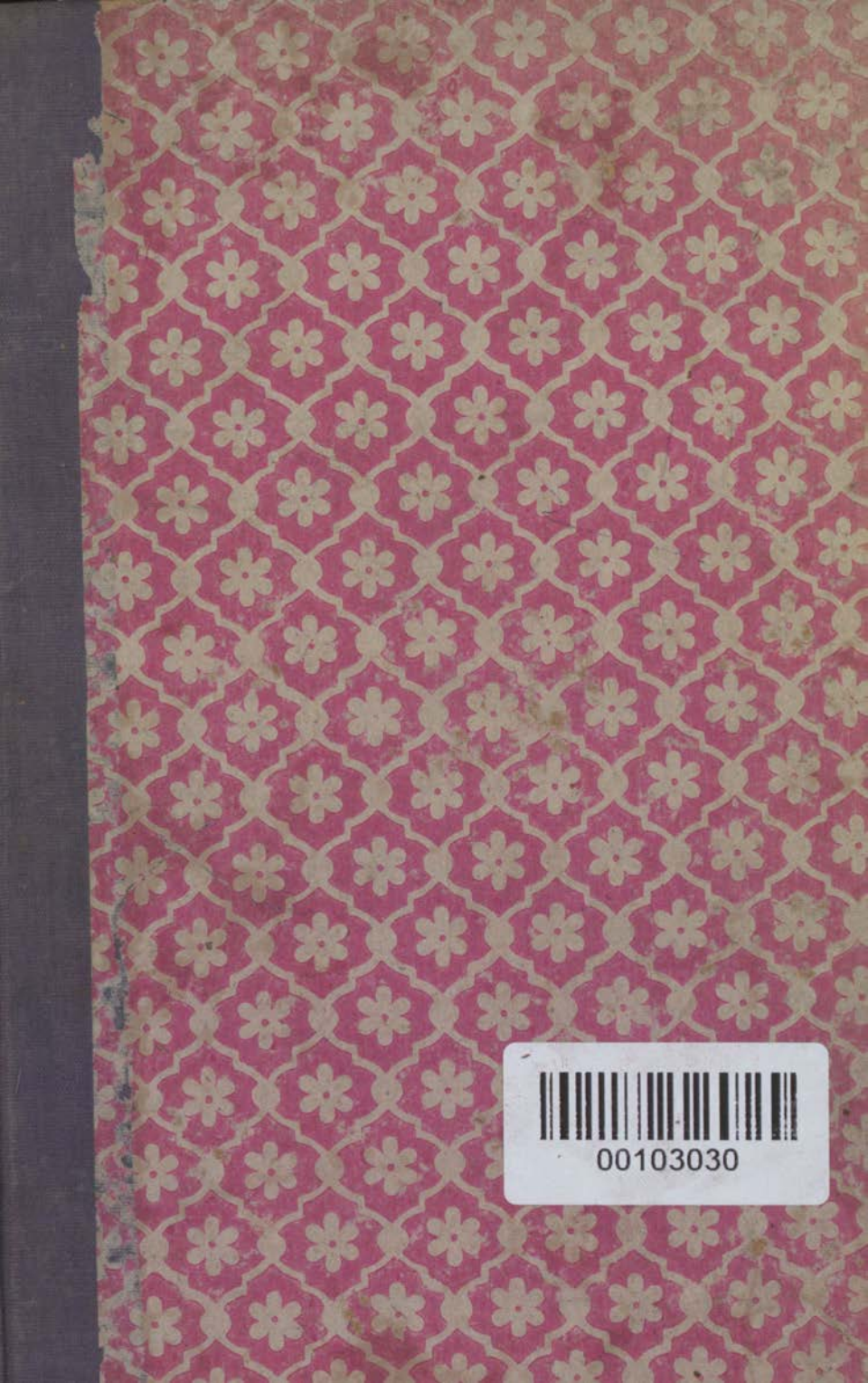
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THE

SHÁHNÁMA OF FIRDAUSÍ

DONE INTO ENGLISH BY

ARTHUR GEORGE WARNER, M.A.

AND

EDMOND WARNER, B.A.

103030 ac

" The homes that are the dwellings of to-day
Will sink 'neath shower and sunshine to decay,
But storm and rain shall never mar what I
Have built—the palace of my poetry."

FIRDAUSÍ

VOL. I

LONDON
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TO

HIS SISTER

CAROLINE WARNER

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED BY HER

SURVIVING BROTHER

PREFACE

THE interest with which I used to look forward to the publication of this work, the preparation of which afforded us innumerable happy hours, has been saddened for me of late by the death of my elder brother and senior partner in the undertaking. It was begun some twenty years ago when he was the Incumbent of St. Mary's, Tothill Fields, Westminster, and had but scanty leisure. It was continued and carried far toward completion in more favourable circumstances after his presentation by the Grocers' Company to the living of St. Mary le Bow, Cheapside, in 1887.

From early days my brother was devoted to the study of Oriental languages. His proficiency in Hebrew won him at Oxford the Pusey and Ellerton Scholarship in 1862 and the Kennicott in 1863. He was also a good Arabic and Syriac scholar. During his twenty-one laborious years first as Curate and then Incumbent at Westminster he never, I think, forewent for long his favourite branch of study, and I may add that we were engaged in revising a passage in our joint translation almost to within an hour of his sudden death from a wholly unsuspected heart-affection in April 1903.

He is, I think, fondly remembered by many. Such

memories are in the nature of things but fleeting; but the written word remains, and I am fain to hope that by the publication of this work I may be raising to him an inconspicuous perhaps but lasting monument.

To the vast majority of English readers the Sháh-náma seems hardly to be known even by name—a fact not to be wondered at, considering how few references are made to it in current literature, and that this is actually the first attempt to give the subject-matter of the great Persian Epic at large in English. It has therefore seemed desirable that the translation should be accompanied by explanatory matter in the forms of Introduction, Note, and Argument. To prepare these has fallen to my lot, and I am accordingly responsible for the many faults of commission and omission that will be only too obvious to the eyes of scholars and experts in this branch of the subject. I am also responsible with my brother for the translation generally, and for its final form throughout. His share, had he lived, would have been larger and more important than mine, but his untimely death will tend to equalise our labours. On reviewing our work as a whole, I venture to hope that the English reader will gain from it a very fairly correct idea of the subject-matter of Firdausí's greatest achievement, and will at least learn from the Introduction and Introductory Notes where to turn for more scholarly and authoritative information on the subject.

I take this opportunity of thanking the Delegates of the Clarendon Press for their kind permission to

make such illustrative extracts as I needed from those volumes of the Sacred Books of the East Series which contain the translations of the Zandavasta and Pahlaví Texts by the late Professor Darmesteter and the late Dr. E. W. West respectively. These translations, with their introductions and notes, are most valuable to the student of the Sháhnáma. I have also to thank my sister, Caroline Warner, and my nephew, George Redston Warner, for occasional help.

I hope to publish our translation a volume at a time, as circumstances permit.

EDMOND WARNER.

ELTHAM, *February* 1905.

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INTRODUCTION

ERRATA

Page 7, line 25 and elsewhere, *for* 'Tritá' *and* 'Traitána' *read* 'Trita' *and* 'Traitana.'
Page 9, line 16 and elsewhere, *for* 'Ázarbíján' *read* 'Ázarbáiján.'
Page 10, reference number 2, *after* R *insert* P.
Page 13, bottom, *for* 'NESH' *read* 'NSEH.'
Page 17, *delete lines* 8–10, *and read* 'from the other side, we may add that Peter the Great gained temporary possession of Darband in A.D. 1722, but it was not finally annexed by Russia till A.D. 1813.'
Page 19, reference number 3, *delete* iii.
Page 31, *delete lines* 13–16, *and read* 'that this minister is referred to on both occasions.'
Page 34, five lines from bottom, *delete* 'While I sat looking on' *and read* 'While I o'erlooked from far.'
Page 37, line 22, *for* 'Arúdí' *read* ''Arúdí.'
Page 39, reference number 1, *delete* §§ i. and vii., *and read* 'The too spiritual conception of the Deity in § i. and the references to 'Alí in § vii.'
Page 43, note 2, *for* 'fakka' *read* 'fakká'.'
Page 62, after reference number 7 *insert* DZA, i. 209.
Page 68, line 9, end, *add* 'or identical with,' *and add to reference number* 1, NIN, 15.
Page 69, bottom, *for* '108' *read* '107.'
Page 71, line 19, *after* 'Oxus' *insert* 'Caspian.'
„ „ reference number 6, end, *add* 'notes.'
Page 88, lines 12 and 26, *for* 'Farvardín' *read* 'Farwardín.'
Page 89, line 4, *for* 'Dín' *read* 'Dai.'
Page 90, *for* '3 generations' *read* '1 generation.'
Page 92, *read thus:* 'A female descendant or relative = KAI KÁÚS (12).'
Siyáwush
Page 106, line 11, beginning, for '*The*' read '*In.*'
Page 113, line 18, *add* full stop at end.
Page 118, line 4, *for* 'mountain of the holy' *read* 'Mountain of the Holy.'
Page 120, delete line 1 and read, '*How Siyámak was slain by the Dív.*'
Page 126, line 16, *for* 'gold' *read* 'good.'
Page 130, line 11, *after* 'gallery' *put* . . .

ERRATA

Page 130, line 23, *for* 'have' *read* 'find,' *and add to reference* 4, WPT. i. 142.
Page 131, line 15, *for* 'They' *read* 'they.'
Page 132, line 11, *add* full stop at end.
Page 138, line 29, *delete* 'thou my' *and read* 'any.'
Page 142, 5 lines from bottom, *for* 'downstricken' *read* 'down-stricken.'
,, ,, 4 lines from bottom, *for* 'Áspikán' *read* 'Áspíkán.'
Page 143, line 7, *for* '1' *read* '2.'
,, ,, line 15, *for* '2' *read* '3.'
,, ,, line 31, *for* '3' *read* '4.'
,, ,, line 33, *for* '4' *read* '5.'
Page 175, line 13, *for* 'He' *read* 'Be.'
Page 227, line 21, delete '*Slain by the Hand of*' and read '*slain by.*'
Page 239, line 21, *for* 'made' *read* 'make.'
Page 293, *add to end of note*, 309, 346.
Page 307, line 7 from bottom, *after* 'lasso' *add* '[1].'
Page 325, line 11, *for* 'Sám' *read* 'Zál.'
Page 342, line 3 from bottom, *for* 'Knowhow' *read* 'Know how.'
Page 351, side reference, *read* '259.'
Page 354, line 21, *for* 'Guzhdaham' *read* 'Gazhdaham.'
Page 355, line 4 from bottom, *delete* comma at end.
Page 366, line 12, *delete* 'not.'
Page 381, line 4 from bottom, *for* 'plants' *read* 'plans.'

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

LAND AND PEOPLE

ÍRÁN, the chief scene of Firdausí's Sháhnáma, is bounded on the north by the Steppes, the Caspian Sea, and the Kúr and Rion rivers, on the south by the Indian Ocean, on the east by the valley of the Indus, and on the west by that of the Tigris and Euphrates, and by the Persian Gulf. At present it includes Persia, Afghanistán, Baluchistán, and small portions of Russia and Turkey.

It is a lofty and for the most part a rainless table-land traversed by numerous mountain-ranges divided from each other by flat plains and falling away toward the centre, which is a desert white with salt scurf or dun with powdery dust. The mountains are highest round the edges of the tableland and intercept most of the rainfall. Some moisture, however, finds its way even into the rainless region, where it gathers during winter on the higher hills in the form of snow. This snow-water is carefully husbanded, and distributed by means of underground water-courses. The interior is, however, drying up, and city, village, and cultivated field are being gradually overwhelmed in dust and shifting sands.

Possibly as late as early historical times very

different conditions prevailed. The lower plains and depressions once formed a series of lakes that suggested the appearance of an inland sea, and such names as island, port, lighthouse, &c., are said to still survive in places as a relic and indication of the old state of things,[1] while a considerable body of water is still to be found in the eastern half of the central depression on the frontier between Persia and Afghanistán. This region is now known as Sístán, but in ancient times was called Drangiana or the lake-country, a name which survived much later in its former capital Zarang, and as "Zirih" is still used in connection with its lake.

From April till late in the autumn the sky, save for an occasional thunderstorm among the mountains, is an unclouded azure, in winter a good deal of snow falls, and in spring the thunderstorms are heavy and frequent. The air is, as a rule, remarkably healthy, but on the borders of the deserts the inhabitants have sometimes to live shut up for weeks together to avoid the pestilential blasts.[2]

The favoured regions are those that front west and north respectively. They are splendidly wooded and extremely fertile, all the ordinary flowers and fruits of Europe do well, while in the district between the Alburz Mountains and the Caspian, and known as Mázandarán, the climate is semitropical and the vegetation most luxuriant. Here rice, the sugar-cane, the vine, the orange, and the olive flourish.[3] In the few watered valleys of the long southern coast the climate is tropical in character. The tamarisk and mimosa are largely represented, and here and there are groves of date-palms.

[1] *E.g.*, near Kasbin, on the road between Tihrán and Hamadán, and at Barchin, a village near Maibud to the north of Yazd. GHP, i. 13; KA, ii. 473.

[2] MHP, ii. 367.

[3] DHA, v. 9.

The immediate neighbourhood of the salt-deserts is the haunt of the wild ass or onager and of the antelope, the slope of the mountain-ranges of the wild sheep or argali, and their summit of the wild goat or ibex. The tracts artificially reclaimed and watered are the favourite home of the sandgrouse, and the highlands of the eagle, the vulture, the falcon, the raven, the crow, and the nightingale—the bulbul of the poets. The acorns of the western slopes attract the wild swine, which in turn tempt the lion from the reed-beds of the Tigris and the cover of its tributaries.[1] Swine, too, abound in Mázandarán and afford food for the tiger which flourishes there, the dense undergrowth and vegetation of that region affording it as good shelter as an Indian jungle.[2] Here, too, are found deer, buffalo, swan, waterfowl, woodcock, and pheasant. Speaking of the country more generally we may add to this list leopards, wildcats, wolves, bears, hyænas, foxes, snakes, scorpions, vipers, lizards, the partridge, and the lark. The chief domestic animals are the ox, the sheep, especially the fat-tailed variety, the horse, the camel, and the mule.

Írán is a land of sharp contrasts, of intense heat and cold, of sudden and abnormal changes of temperature, of dead level and steep ascent, of splendid fertility hard by lifeless desolation, of irrigation and dust. Its natural characteristics find expression in the ancient cosmogony of its people. We are told that Urmuzd—the Good Principle—created earth as a lovely plain bathed in a mild perpetual radiance, fanned by soft temperate airs, bounteously provided with fresh sweet waters, and clad in a smooth and harmless vegetation. Here the First Man and the First Ox dwelt in peace and happiness. Áhriman—the Evil Principle—broke into this fair scene and all was changed. Gloom minged with light, the seasons' difference began, the

[1] EP, ii. 30. [2] *Id.* 34.

seas turned salt, the streams dwindled, the vegetation grew rough and thorny, drought came and dust and desert; mountain-ranges sprang up from the plain, and the man and ox were stricken with disease and died; but from the body of the former sprang the first human pair from whom all the earth was overspread, and from the body of the latter all other harmless, useful, and beautiful animals, while Áhriman in opposition to these created all noisome and hideous insects, reptiles, and creatures sharp of fang or claw.

Let us now turn from the land to the people. For us there is no occasion to discuss questions of race from any very modern standpoint. For us it is rather what ethnical views obtained in ancient Írán and moulded its traditions. As to these there is happily little room for doubt, Darius Hystaspis, the founder of the Persian empire and the greatest of its historic Sháhs, having decided the matter for us. On the rock of Bíhistún he recorded his great achievements in a trilingual inscription, the languages employed being ancient Persian, Babylonian, and Scythian. The obvious explanation of his proceeding is, that he recognised in the population of his vast empire three distinct races of mankind, and, regarding language as distinctive of race, used it to emphasise that great political fact. In thus distinguishing he followed a true philological instinct, and his distinctions still largely obtain at the present day. Each of his three languages represents a great division of human speech. His view, as we shall see, agrees with the traditions and legends of his race, and if some modern Sháh were to restore the empire of Darius, and wished to imitate the example of his great predecessor, he would still have to choose languages typical of the same three divisions. In what follows, therefore, language is made the basis of classification, and the divisions thus classified are commonly called the Indo-European, the Semitic, and

the Túránian respectively. It is with peoples of the first division that we are chiefly concerned, and only so far as these came into contact with peoples of the other two divisions are we concerned about the latter.

At the dawn of history we find peoples speaking languages which, theoretically at all events, may be traced back to one primitive tongue, holding similar religious notions and organised politically as independent self-governing tribes, in possession of large geographical areas both in Europe and Asia. They thus fall into two great divisions—an European and an Asiatic—and are generally known as the Indo-European race. The Asiatic branch seems to have occupied in early times the neighbourhoods of Balkh, Harát, Marv, and possibly of Samarkand. It described itself as Aryan or noble, as opposed to all those with whom it came into contact, much as the Greeks divided mankind into Hellenes and Barbaroi. It was organised into three orders or castes—priests, warriors, and husbandmen. Its religion was a frank worship of personified natural forces. Its priests were fire-priests, and fire was an especial object of adoration along with the other beneficent powers of nature—Mitra or Mithra, Yama or Yima, Tritá, Traitána, and others. Opposed to these were the malignant spirits of drought and darkness, as, for instance, Azi or Azhi, also known as Daháka—the biter, the serpent-fiend. Water was ever growing scarcer, and drought or plenty turned in the imagination of a primitive people on the struggle of the good and evil spirits for its possession. The former appeared in the lightning-flash, while the gloomy convolutions of the thunder-cloud suggested the idea that fiends in serpent-form were striving to carry off the precious fluid—the heavenly waters as distinguished from the earthly waters—and hinder it from descending to the help of man. The cloud—the rain-bringer—

was perversely regarded as the rain-stealer. The good spirits hastened to the rescue, the lightning-flash clove the cloud, and the demons dropped their booty. The serpent-fiend had to be combated for other reasons too, for his bite brought fever, disease, and death. Accordingly the divine physician appeared side by side with the divine hero, Tritá with Traitána, and became, as we shall see later on, merged into a single personality in Íránian legend. Sacrifices were offered, and the drink-offering of the juice of the Soma or Homa plant was poured forth. The plant is usually identified as being the *Asclepias acida* or *Sarcostemma viminale*.[1] The Aryans also worshipped the spirits of their ancestors, and were believers in what is called sympathetic magic. They thought that injury done to anything in the remotest way connected with their own persons would affect themselves injuriously. Even the knowledge of their name might be turned to their hurt, and we shall find instances in the poem of children being brought up unnamed to avoid that contingency.

At a period which cannot be put at less than four thousand years ago the Aryans themselves divided, and while a portion descended to the Indus and became the dominant race in India, the rest remained and gradually took possession of all that was habitable in the vast region that consequently became known as the land of the Aryans or Írán. The Aryans thus became separated into two branches—an Eastern and a Western. With the former we are but little concerned; the legendary story of the latter is the theme of the Sháhnáma.

Of these Western Aryans the two most famous peoples have ever been the Medes and Persians.

[1] The plant grows in the regions about Samarkand and Balkh in the north and in Kirmán in the south. The shoots were pounded in a mortar, and water being added a greenish liquid was produced, which having been strained was mixed with milk and barley or wild rice and allowed to ferment. The product was intoxicating. See GHP, i. 36; DHA, iv. 53.

The Medes, whose modern representatives, if any, seem to be the Kúrds, appear in ancient times to have been a loose confederation of kindred tribes broken up into numerous settlements, each under its local headman or chief.[1] They seem to have had no supreme political head or king to unite the race under one central authority. Their common bond, if any, was a religious one under their priests, the Magi. According to their own traditions the original seat of the race was Írán-vej, *i.e.*, "Íránian seed," and this has been well identified with the district of Karabagh, the ancient Arrán, the Ἀριανία of the Greeks, between the Kúr and the Aras, where the Anti-Caucasus forms the true north-western scarp of the tableland of Írán.[2] In historical times, however, we first find the Medes in possession of the province of Ázarbíján, or, to give it its ancient title, Atropatene. The Persians occupied from time immemorial the country on the eastern shores of the Persian Gulf, now represented by the modern provinces of Farsistán and Laristán, and were ruled by kings of the house of Achaemenes. These two peoples, closely connected as they were by language and race, became in the days of Darius Hystaspis dominant in Írán, and to this domination the Medes appear to have contributed the religious, the Persians the political, element. Between the Medes and the Persians lay in ancient times, as we learn from Assyrian and Babylonian records, other kindred peoples—the kingdom of Elam, with its capital at Susa, some twenty-five miles west of the modern Shuster, and the kingdom of Ellipi, in the neighbourhood of the modern Hamadán. The Íránians as a whole were bounded on the west by Semitic and on the north by Túránian peoples. On the east they were conterminous with the Aryans of India, and ultimately they came into contact with the Western

[1] The "kings of the Medes" of Jer. xxv. 25.

[2] DZA, i. 3 and notes; KA, i. 45.

Indo-Europeans as well, notably with the Greeks and Romans. As the cosmogony and religion of the Íránians were largely derived from their physical, so was their tradition from their ethnical, environment. We are concerned with all three, but especially with the last—their tradition. The remainder of the present chapter will therefore be devoted to a brief, and necessarily dry, summary of their historical relations with the Semites as represented by the Assyrians in early and the Arabs in later times, with other Indo-European races represented by the Greeks and Romans in the west and by the Hindus in the east, and with the Túránians as represented by the Kimmerians, Scythians, Parthians, Huns and Turks.

The Íránians and the Semites.—In the numerous contemporary records of the Assyrians we find many references to the Íránians. The whole of the western frontier of Írán, from the Medes in the north to the Persians in the south, seems to have been subjected at one point or another to almost constant aggression, at first by mere raids but later on by attempts at permanent conquest, at the hands of the great warrior-monarchs of Nineveh—Shalmaneser II. (B.C. 858–823),[1] Samas Rimmon II. (B.C. 823–810),[2] Rimmon-nirari III. (B.C. 810–783),[3] Tiglath Pilesar III. (B.C. 745–727),[4] Sargon (B.C. 722–705),[5] Sennacherib (B.C. 705–681),[6] Esarhaddon I. (B.C. 681–668),[7] and Assurbanipal (B.C. 668–626).[8] The attempts at permanent conquest date from the reign of Sargon. The long reign of Assurbanipal falls into two periods, a former of great extension and conquest, and a latter when the tide began to turn and the Assyrian empire, overstrained and exhausted, showed signs of decay. Finally, in the reign of Esarhaddon II., Nineveh fell (B.C. 606), over-

[1] RPNS, iv. 38–51. [2] R, i. 11–22. [3] DHA, ii. 326.
[4] *Id.* iii. 3–5. [5] RP, ix. 3–20. [6] RPNS, vi. 83–101.
[7] RP, iii. 103–124. [8] *Id.*, ix. 39–64.

whelmed by a confederacy which included the Medes. Probably no empire was ever less lamented by the world at large, for we have the Assyrians' own word for it that their warfare was attended with every circumstance of cruelty and horror. They hold indeed a bad pre-eminence in that respect over all the other nations of antiquity.

With the fall of Nineveh serious Semitic aggression ceased, so far as the Iránians were concerned, till after the Christian era had begun. Arabia was at that epoch extremely prosperous, and carried on a vast caravan traffic in native produce and imports from India with the west and north. When, however, Rome had become recognised as the centre of the world, her merchants soon hit upon a less circuitous and consequently cheaper route. They started a direct traffic between India and the Red Sea, whereby merchandise, instead of being landed in Southern Arabia and thence conveyed northwards by land, was discharged at Arsinoe, Cleopatris (Suez), and other Egyptian ports. As a result, Southern Arabia—the most fertile and populous region of the peninsula—was ruined, and in time, both there and along the lines of the old caravan-routes, only massive remains of cities, canals, dams, and aqueducts were left to witness to a lost prosperity. A vast population was thrown out of employment, and the Arabs began to emigrate northward as early, it would seem, as the first century A.D. The Azdites in this way founded the cities of Hira and Anbar on the Euphrates, and were lords of Damascus till the days of the Khalífa 'Umar. Other tribes from the south settled in the mountains of Ajá and Salmá, to the north of Najd and Al Hajáz. These Northern Arabs were divided in their allegiance between the Roman and Sásánian empires; and their quarrels among themselves, their restlessness and inconstancy, made them thorns in the sides of both, and led to many

difficulties. The defeat of Julian by Sapor II. is said to have been largely due to the defection of the Arab allies of the former, while on the other hand the western frontier of Írán was always liable to be overrun by them as far north as and including Ázarbíján. The havoc caused was often great, and the retaliation, on occasions, ferocious.

With the rise of Muhammad the Arabs became a great religious and political power. After his death in A.D. 632 he was succeeded in turn by Abú Bakr and 'Umar. In the course of the ten years of the latter's rule Írán was conquered by his generals after the three great battles of Kádisiyya and Jalúlá in A.D. 637, and Nahávand, A.D. 641. A dynasty of high officials of the Sásánian empire still held out and maintained the ancient faith in the fastnesses of Mázandarán,[1] but Írán as a whole was both from a religious and a political point of view submerged. The religious conquest proved to be permanent, but after a time national feeling began to re-assert itself against the political, as the following brief summary of events may serve to show. 'Umar appointed a committee of five to select the next Khalífa after his death. After long debate they chose 'Uthmán, but subsequently repenting of their choice three of the five brought about his assassination after a reign of twelve years, and nominated 'Alí as Khalífa (A.D. 656). 'Uthmán was of the Umayyad family, and its head Mu'áwiya, then governor of Syria, took up arms to avenge him. Neither had any direct claim to the Khiláfat, but 'Alí was the son of Muhammad's uncle Abú Tálib, and had married the prophet's daughter Fátima, known as "the maiden." Muhammad had said of him: "'Alí is for me, and I am for him; he stands to me in the same rank as Aaron did to Moses; I am the town in which all knowledge is shut up, and he is the gate

[1] NSEH, 139.

of it."[1] 'Alí came to be regarded as associated in a very special way with the prophet, and was known as his executor or mandatary, and also as the Lion of God, or simply as the Lion. Mu'áwiya, on the other hand, was the son of one of Muhammad's bitterest opponents, and had nothing but his own abilities to recommend him. In the heat of the contest which ensued some of 'Alí's followers in their zeal for him went too far. They not only claimed the Khiláfat for him by divine right, but actually denied that Abú Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmán had any title to be regarded as legitimate Khalífas at all. This shocked and drew a good many of the faithful into Mu'áwiya's camp, and the two parties became known as Shí'ites (partisans) and Sunnites (orthodox). In the event an extreme Muhammadan sect known as Kharijites (dissenters), which arose at that time, denied the rights of both candidates, advocated the bestowal of the Khiláfat on "the best," and came to the conclusion that the true course out of the difficulty would be to remove both. 'Alí was accordingly assassinated, but Mu'áwiya escaped and became Khalífa without further dispute.[2] The wrongs of 'Alí, however, as many thought them, had taken hold on the popular mind, especially in Írán, and were intensified when his son Husain — the grandson of Muhammad himself—was slain by Mu'áwiya's son and successor Yizid, A.D. 681. The Umayyads, whose chief support lay in Syria, had necessarily to rule from Damascus, and this tended to slacken their hold over their Eastern possessions. Taking advantage of this fact, and exploiting the feeling about 'Alí to their own advantage, the descendants of 'Abbás, one of Muhammad's uncles, gradually undermined the position of the reigning house, till at length in the year A.D. 750, with the assistance of the Persians, they supplanted the Umayyads everywhere except in Spain. The

[1] OHS, 331. [2] NESH, 80.

triumph of the 'Abbásids was a half triumph for Persian nationality, and the fact was recognised by the abandonment of Damascus as the seat of empire, and a return to the old state of things that had prevailed under the Sásánians by the building of Baghdád and the transference to it of the seat of government. Another triumph was won when, after the death of Hárúnú'r-Rashíd, his son Mámún, whose mother was a Persian slave, overcame with Persian help his brother Amín, who was supported by Syria. Mámún was the last great 'Abbásid Khalífa (A.D. 813–833). Decline soon followed. In A.D. 861 the Khalífa Mutawakkil was murdered by his own son, and the 'Abbásids became thenceforth insignificant, having little power outside the walls of Baghdád and dependent chiefly on the forbearance of their mayors of the palace, if the expression may be applied to Eastern history, who preferred to veil their own supremacy behind the reverence still inspired by the Khalífas in their religious aspect as Commanders of the Faithful. In the tenth century this office was held by the Dílamids, who claimed descent from the ancient Persian kings and were fervent Shí'ites. They ruled over Western and Southern Írán, posing the while as the Khalífas' most obedient slaves. In the north and east the Sámánides, who claimed to be descended from the famous Íránian hero Bahrám Chubína, but were in reality of Turkman descent, were supreme. The political supremacy of the Arabs in Írán was at an end.

The Íránians and the Greeks and Romans.—The historic strife between Persian and Greek is so familiar to us that it is hard to realise that the only portion of it in Íránian legend that in any way coincides with authentic history is that which deals with the invasion of the East by Alexander the Great; and even this is mostly based not on native but Greek tradition, so modified by Íránian patriotism as to gloss over or explain

away the great overthrow of the East by the West. A genuine native tradition dating from those times would be extremely interesting, and it is very disappointing not to have it. Nothing survives of Alexander the Great in native Íránian legend except a conviction that he was one of the great persecutors and destroyers of Zoroastrianism. This will be referred to later on, when we have to touch upon the preservation of Íránian tradition in general. It would seem as if the long predominance of the Roman empire on the stage of history had obliterated the memory of most of the great events of earlier ages and distorted that of the rest. We should expect, however, that at least the Roman empire itself during its greatest period would receive some recognition, especially an event so glorious for the East as the overthrow of Crassus at Carrhae (B.C. 53), but again we are disappointed. The explanation seems to be that during the whole period of the rise and greatness of Rome, Írán was under foreign domination, first Grecian and then Parthian. At all events it is not till a native dynasty rules again in Írán that we begin to find common ground in Íránian and Roman history, and this is not till the third century of the Christian era. Till then Rome obliterated Greece only to be ignored itself in all but the name. Íránian tradition knows of Rúm but of nothing behind it.

The Íránians and the Aryans of India.—In this case the interest for us is chiefly a religious one. From the date (B.C. 250) of the conversion of the Indian king, Asoka of Magadha, to Buddhism that faith began to extend rapidly. Asoka, like all sincere converts, was an enthusiast, and in his reign Buddhism was preached not only in India itself but in Eastern Írán, and even so far west, it is said, as the shores of the Caspian.[1] It prospered much and continued to hold its own in Kábulistán till A.D. 850,

[1] DHA, iv, 543; Gray, "At the Court of the Amir," 143; HIE, 149.

when a Brahman dynasty replaced the Buddhist. It was probably not much before the eleventh century of the Christian era that Muhammadanism finally triumphed in those regions.[1] To the Zoroastrian, however, no less than to the Muhammadan, Buddhism and Brahmanism were alike idolatry, and this view has left, as we shall see, its mark on Íránian legend. The fierce wars carried on against the idolaters of India by the Muhammadans of Eastern Írán at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century have also left their mark.

The Íránians and Túránians.—Savage, barbarous, and uncouth, the nations of the North have always been notorious for the disgust and terror with which they have inspired the higher civilisations of the South. The Túránians were little better than the Assyrians in their treatment of vanquished foes, and decidedly worse in aspect. In the most ancient times of which we have any record, the great highway for these nations southward lay between the Caspian and Euxine Seas. They had therefore to cross the barrier of the Caucasus, which is said to be only passable, save by expert Alpine climbers, in three places, one at each end and one near the centre. Of these the most practicable for large bodies of men lay along the flat shores of the Caspian. The Caucasus stops short of that sea, and only one spur of the range running in a north-easterly direction nearly approaches it. Between this spur and the sea, where the passage is narrowest, stands the town of Darband. Here, according to the legend, Sikandar, *i.e.* Alexander the Great, built a mighty barrier to restrain the incursions of Gog and Magog, *i.e.* of the Túránians. Such a wall extending across the Pass of Darband was actually built for that purpose by the great Sásánian Sháh Núshírwán, the contemporary of the Emperor Justinian, and those two rulers agreed to share the

[1] EHI, ii. 415, &c.

expense of preventing barbarism from penetrating south of the Caucasus.[1] Two centuries later, when the Khazars, a Turkish race from what is now Southern Russia, captured Tiflis and wrought great havoc, the 'Abbásid Khalífa Mansúr erected defensive works and secured the whole region up to the great mountain-barrier.[2] Coming down to later times, and regarding the matter from the other side, we may mention that one of Peter the Great's first acts after his accession to the throne was to make sure of Darband.

The first historical invasion by a Túránian race is that of the Kimmerians of Homer and Herodotus, the Gomer of the Bible and the Gimirrá of the Assyrian inscriptions, who appear to have dwelt in early times on the Dniester and the Sea of Azof, whence they were driven by the pressure of kindred races whom the Assyrians called Manda. Traversing the Pass of Darband they settled for a time north of the Aras, where undoubtedly they must have come into contact with the Medes. Being still pressed upon from the north, they made an unsuccessful attempt to invade Assyria in B.C. 677, and then turned westward into Asia Minor.[3]

In the wake of the Kimmerian invasion came the cause of it—the Sacae or Scythians, who seem to have forced the line of the Aras, to have overrun the territory of the Medes and the kingdom of Ellipi, and to have established as their capital the famous city of Ekbatana, the modern Hamadán, in what has always been known in ancient history as Media Magna. It seems to have been this domination of the Sacae at Ekbatana that has been recorded for us in history as the Empire of the Medes. The confusion appears to

[1] GDF, v. 87–89. In RSM, 352, this arrangement is said to have begun in the reigns of Yazdagird II. and the younger Theodosius. The reader will find a picture of Darband (Derbent) and its wall in KA, i. 76.

[2] NSEH, 138.

[3] SHC, 124.

have arisen from the similarity between the Assyrian words for Medes and nomads respectively, the former being Madá and the latter Manda, coupled with the fact that the Madá and Manda both formed part of the confederation which, under the leadership of Kastarit, the Kyaxares of the Greeks, overthrew Nineveh.[1] The empire of the Manda at Ekbatana—the so-called Median Empire—continued till the middle of the sixth century B.C. It shared the dominion over Western Asia with Babylon and Lydia, and was no doubt the cause of the elaborate defensive works with which Nebuchadnezzar, mindful of the fate of Nineveh, sought to make his capital impregnable: it held the overlordship of Western Írán. In the year B.C. 550, however, Cyrus, king of Elam, rebelled against his overlord, Istuvegu of Ekbatana, the Astyages of the Greeks, and overthrew him in the following year.[2] Cyrus then subjugated the Persians, entered Babylon in B.C. 544, conquered Asia Minor and all the tableland of Írán, united its tribes for the first time in history under one government, and became known to later times as Cyrus the Great. He is said to have extended his conquests to the Jaxartes, on the borders of which he erected fortresses to hold the nomad tribes in check,[3] and the Greek historians, with the exception of Xenophon, represent him as perishing in a war with the Scythians. The legend of Cyrus and Tomyris, the queen of the Massagetae, told by Herodotus, is well known.[4] Cyrus' second successor, Darius Hystaspis, the false Smerdis being left out of the question, also carried the war into the enemy's country, and advanced beyond the Danube in B.C. 513, though not very successfully, to avenge, as Herodotus tells us,[5] the Scythian invasions which preceded the fall of the Assyrian Empire.

In the century after the death of Alexander the

[1] SHC, 484, 520. [2] *Id.* 499. [3] DHA, v. 22; vi. 103.
[4] Herod. i. 205. [5] *Id.* iv. 1.

Great the Parthians, reinforced by another Túránian tribe known as the Dahae, rebelled against the Seleucids (B.C. 250), and became the dominant race in Írán, till a successful revolt (A.D. 226) placed the native Sásánian dynasty on the throne. During their long domination the Parthians in their turn suffered from the incursions of kindred races from the North, in much the same way as the English settlers in Britain suffered from the Danes. The second century before the Christian era was marked by great activity on the part of the Túránians, and the whole border of Írán from the Hindu Kush to the Caspian was overrun by them. Two Parthian monarchs in succession—Phraates II. and Artabanus II.—were defeated and slain, and the Parthian Empire was only saved from overthrow by Mithridates II. Foiled by him the Túránians turned to the East and permanently settled in Eastern Írán, in the region which has ever since been called after one of their peoples, Sacaestan or Sístán, the stead or home of the Sacae (*c.* B.C. 100).

Another Túránian people, known as the Aláns or Aláni, who first appear, it is said,[1] in Chinese annals, were on the Volga in the first century of the Christian era. Pressed upon by the Huns, who had defeated them in a great battle, they overran Media and Armenia, some of them finding their way into the Caucasus, where their descendants, it is said, still exist.[2] Thence in A.D. 133, at the invitation of Pharasmanes, king of Iberia, they invaded Ázarbíján and Armenia, ravaged the country, and had to be bought off by Vologeses II., the Parthian monarch of the time.

The Huns, who had been instrumental in precipitating the Aláni on Írán, were themselves in flight before other hordes. A large contingent of them seized and settled upon the oasis of Samarkand or Sughd. Here, improved by long settlement both in aspect and manners,[3]

[1] GDF, iii. 315-316, and note. [2] *Id.* [3] *Id.* iii, 312.

they became known as the White Huns; or to the Íránians, who carried on many wars with them, as the Haitálians.

Lastly, in the middle of the sixth century of the Christian era the name of the Turks begins to appear in history. Spreading from Mount Altai, or the Golden Mountain, in Central Asia, they extended themselves over the northern half of the continent, subjugating among other nations the Haitálians. The empire of the Turks only lasted about two centuries,[1] but the tribes and nations of which it was composed were spread over the north of Asia from China to the Oxus and the Danube, and under the name of Turkmans have proved a permanent menace to the northern frontiers of Írán.

The 'Abbásids soon learned to avail themselves of the services of Turkman chiefs in the administration of their empire. It was thus that the Sámánids first rose to power under the Khalífa Mámún, only, as we have seen, to make themselves independent under his degenerate successors. About the year A.D. 961 a disputed succession occurred among the Sámánids. The rightful heir in the direct line was a boy only eight years old, and for that reason, as the times were troublous, a party among the nobles declared in favour of his uncle, his father's brother. The matter was referred for settlement to the Sámánid governor of Khurásán—a man of Turkman descent named Alptigín—but before his decision arrived the dispute had been settled and Mansùr had succeeded to the throne. Alptigín had given his decision in favour of the uncle, and being fearful of Mansúr's vengeance he withdrew from Khurásán and carved himself out a small principality at Ghazní. He died in A.D. 969, and after two short reigns the troops elected Subúktigín to be their chief. He was a Turkman, had been brought up

[1] GDF, v. 175

in the household of Alptigín, had subsequently acted as his general, and was a man of great ability and courage. He speedily enlarged his dominions and began those raids into India which became so frequent in the days of his more famous son. In the meantime the Sámánid ruler Mansúr had died, and his son, the Amír Nuh II., was driven from his capital at Bukhárá by a Turkman invasion instigated by two of his own nobles, who subsequently, however, were compelled to flee for their lives. They appealed for aid to the Dílamids—the rivals of the Sámánids—and obtained it. On this the Amír Nuh II. himself appealed for help to Subuktigín, who marched to his assistance. A great battle was fought at Harát, and Subuktigín gained a decisive victory. The Amír in his gratitude bestowed on him the title of Násiru'd-Dín, or Defender of the Faith, and on his eldest son Mahmúd, who had greatly distinguished himself, that of Saifu'd-Daula, or Sword of the State, as well as the governorship of Khurásán. This happened in A.D. 994. Three years later Subuktigín died. He left three sons, Mahmúd, Ismá'íl, and Nasr, and appointed Ismá'íl to succeed him. Mahmúd seems to have behaved well, but after vain attempts at conciliation and compromise he was compelled to assert himself against his brother, who was speedily overthrown and ended his days in internment as a state-prisoner. The other brother, Nasr, supported Mahmúd. Shortly afterwards the Sámánid dynasty flickered out after the death of the Amír Nuh II., and in A.D. 999 Mahmúd formally assumed the sovereignty, an event which is duly noted on his coins by the prefix of Amír to his own titles, and the omission of the name of the Sámánid overlord which previously had been retained by the rulers of Ghazní.[1] Mahmúd was then twenty-eight years old. His career as a great conqueror and

[1] EHI, ii. 479.

religious fanatic is well known. His domination extended from the Punjáb to the Tigris, and from Bukhárá to the Indian Ocean. He has, however, another claim upon our memories. His name was to become for ever associated with that of the poet of the Sháhnáma who had despaired in those troublous times of obtaining any adequate royal patronage for his long formed design of moulding into song the epic history of his land and people. It was a moment of high hopes for many, for the young and ambitious prince, for the ambitious but no longer youthful poet, and for all who either by birth or adoption had the welfare of Írán at heart. The Arab yoke had been shaken off, Persian was reviving in the literature, old Iránian names were being resumed, and there seemed the fairest prospects for the establishment of a third Persian empire with Mahmúd for its first Sháh. It is true that religious differences remained. Half Írán was Shí'ite and the other half Sunnite,[1] but save for that it seemed a stroke of fair fortune that made the great king and the great poet contemporaries.

[1] The Turkman element was strongly Sunnite. Persia did not become thoroughly Shí'ite till the sixteenth century. NSEH, 101.

CHAPTER II

POET AND POEM.

THE most trustworthy materials for the life of Firdausí are to be found in his own personal references, there being probably no poem of considerable length in which the writer keeps himself so much in evidence as Firdausí does in the Sháhnáma. Next in authority to his own statements we must place the account given of him by Nizámí-i-'Arúdí of Samarkand in his work entitled "Chahár Makála," *i.e.* "Four Discourses."[1] They are on Secretaries, Poets, Astrologers, and Physicians respectively, and consist chiefly of anecdotes. One of these, in the "Discourse on Poets," gives the valuable account of Firdausí. Unfortunately it throws doubt on the authenticity of the extant version of one of his compositions—the Satire on Sultán Mahmúd, only a few lines of which, if Nizámí is to be believed, can be regarded as Firdausí's own. They suffice, however, to indicate one good reason for the poet's difference with Mahmúd and the general line that he took in his literary revenge, though that Sultán, it is pretty evident, never even heard that the poet had written the Satire at all! In addition to the above-mentioned sources of information there are two formal biographies of the poet. One, which dates about A.D. 1425, was compiled by order of Baisinghar Khán, the grandson of Tímúr the Lame, and is prefixed to the former's edition of the text of the Sháhnáma. It is apparently based on an older metrical life of which

[1] BCM.

it preserves some extracts, and is itself the basis of most of the biographical notices of the poet, including that in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The other, which dates about A.D. 1486, is in Daulat Sháh's "Lives of the Poets," and is preferred by the writer of the article "Ferdoucy" in the *Biographie Universelle*. Both are used by Mohl in the preface to his edition of the text and translation of the Sháhnáma, and both are full of mythical details.

Let us first confine ourselves to the statements in the poet's undoubted writings and to legitimate deductions therefrom. He calls himself Abú 'l Kásim, and we gather that he was born about A.D. 941. We arrive at this in the following way. In the whole Sháhnáma there is only one definite date—that on which he finished the poem. This, mixing up the Muhammadan era with the Zoroastrian calendar, he tells us he did on the day of Ard in the month of Sapandármad of the year 400 of the Hijra. This particular year, for the Muhammadan years are lunar and vary accordingly, began on August 25th, A.D. 1009, and ended on the 14th day of that month in the year following. Therefore Firdausí finished the Sháhnáma on February 25th, A.D. 1010. He gives his one date in the concluding lines of the poem, where he also says:—

> When one and seventy years had passed me by
> The heavens bowed down before my poetry.[1]

This we may fairly interpret as meaning that he finished his work when he was seventy-one years old, *i.e.* about sixty-nine, as we reckon, since thirty-four Muhammadan years go to about thirty-three of ours.

The poet was a Muhammadan of the Shí'ite sect. This is clear from his reference to 'Alí 'in his Prelude.[2]

[1] C, 2095.

[2] In this volume § 7.

Moreover, he was not a strict Muhammadan in the matter of wine-drinking:—

The time to quaff delicious wine is now,
For musky scents breathe from the mountain-brow,
The air resoundeth and earth travaileth,
And blest is he whose heart drink gladdeneth,
He that hath wine and money, bread and sweets,
And can behead a sheep to make him meats.
These have not I. Who hath them well is he.
Oh! pity one that is in poverty![1]

And again:—

Bring tulip-tinted wine, O Háshimí!
From jars that never need replenishing.
Why seek I who am deaf at sixty-three
The world's grace and observance?[2]

He soon after has a fit of repentance:—

Old man whose years amount to sixty-three!
Shall wine be still the burden of thy lay?
Without a warning life may end with thee;
Think of repentance then, seek wisdom's way.
May God approve this slave. May he attain
In wisdom riches and in singing gain.[3]

He owned or occupied land; at least the following passages suggest that conclusion:—

A cloud hath risen and the moon's obscured,
From that dark cloud a shower of milk is poured,
No river plain or upland can I spy,
The raven's plumes are lost against the sky,
In one unceasing stream egg-apples fall:
What is high heaven's purpose in it all?
No fire-wood salted meat or barley-grain
Are left me, naught till harvest come again!
Amid this gloom, this day of tax and fear,
When earth with snow is like an ivory sphere,
All mine affairs in overthrow will end
Unless my hand is grasped by some good friend.[4]

[1] V, 1630. [2] C, 1457. [3] *Id.* 1460.
[4] *Id.*, 1487. Reading last line with P.

And again:—

> The hail this year like death on me hath come
> Though death itself were better than the hail,
> And heaven's lofty far extending dome
> Hath caused my fuel sheep and wheat to fail.[1]

In some verses, complaining of the advance of old age, he alludes to a calamity that befell him when he was fifty-eight, or it may be that an escape from drowning, which he seems to have had about that time, had a sobering effect upon him. This accident will be referred to in another connection later on. He says:—

> Since I took up the cup of fifty-eight
> The bier and grave, naught else, I contemplate.
> Ah! for my sword-like speech when I was thirty,
> Those luscious days, musk-scented, roseate![2]

At the age of sixty-five he lost his son:—

> At sixty-five 'tis ill to catch at pelf.
> Oh! let me read that lesson to myself
> And muse upon the passing of my son.
> My turn it was to go yet he hath gone.
> . . . . . .
> Seven years and thirty o'er the youth had sped
> When he distasted of the world and fled.
> . . . . . .
> He hurried off alone. I stayed to see
> The outcome of my labours.[3]

In the year following his son's death he speaks of himself as being much broken:—

> While three score years and five were passing by,
> Like Spring-winds o'er the desert, poverty
> And toil were mine; next year like one bemused
> I leaned upon a staff, my hands refused

[1] C, 2089. [2] V, 680.
[3] C, 1951.

The rein, my cheeks grew moon-like pale, my beard
Lost its black hue and camphor-like appeared,
Mine upright stature bent as age came on
And all the lustre of mine eyes was gone.[1]

He never speaks of himself as having any profession or official position, but if we may hazard a conjecture it is that he or his son or both were educated for the office of scribe. He puts the following glorification of that profession into the mouth of Búzurjmihr, the famous chief minister of the still more famous Sháh Núshírwán:[2]—

Teach to thy son the business of the scribe
That he may be as life to thee and thine,
And, as thou wouldest have thy toils bear fruit,
Grudge not instructors to him, for this art
Will bring a youth before the throne and make
The undeserving fortune's favourite.
Of all professions 'tis the most esteemed,
Exalting even those of lowly birth.
A ready scribe who is a man of rede
Is bound to sit e'en in the royal presence
And, if he be a man of diligence,
Will have uncounted treasure from the Sháh,
While if endowed with fluency and style
He will be studious to improve himself,
Use his endeavours to be more concise
And put his matter more attractively.
The scribe hath need to be a man of wisdom,
Of much endurance and good memory,
A man of tact, accustomed to Court-ways,
A holy man whose tongue is mute for evil,
A man of knowledge, patience, truthfulness,
A man right trusty pious and well-favoured.
If thus endowed he cometh to the Sháh
He cannot choose but sit before the throne.[3]

However this may be, from the time when he became his own master he appears to have devoted him-

[1] V, 1274.

[2] The poet also represents this Sháh as being highly indignant when a wealthy cordwainer, in return for valuable services, ventures to ask as a favour that his son may be made a scribe. C, 1778.

[3] C, 1676.

self to poetry. Referring to the completion of the Sháhnáma he says:—

> My life from youth to eld hath run its course
> In hearing other and mine own discourse.[1]

We have already had an allusion to his "sword-like speech" when he was thirty, and we know that between the ages of thirty-five and sixty-nine he was occupied on the Sháhnáma. He tells us in a passage that will be quoted later on that he spent thirty-five years on that poem, *i.e.* about thirty-four years as we reckon. The prose materials for this, he informs us, already had been embodied in book-form,[2] and the idea of turning them into verse had suggested itself to the poet Dakíkí, a young man of brilliant parts but of vicious habits, who was murdered by the hand of one of his own slaves.[3] Dakíkí had only just begun his great task when he was cut off, but Firdausí admits his priority:—

> Although he only rhymed the veriest mite—
> One thousand couplets full of feast and fight—
> He was my pioneer and he alone
> In that he set the Sháhs upon the throne.
> From nobles honour and emolument
> Had he; his trouble was his own ill bent.
> To sing the praises of the kings was his
> And crown the princes with his eulogies.[4]

Dakíkí seems to have died about A.D. 976, for Firdausí took up the work and it employed him for the next thirty-four years as we reckon. At first he found himself hampered through lack of the necessary materials. What those were will be explained later on in the present chapter. He made countless inquiries and began to despair, fearing that like Dakíkí he should not live to complete his undertaking. He

[1] C, 2096. [2] See Prelude, § 8. [3] *Id.* § 9.
[4] V, 1555.

also suffered from lack of patronage and encouragement. The times were troublous and men's minds were otherwise occupied. At length both the needful materials and the patron were vouchsafed him. The former were obtained for him by a friend and fellow-townsman.[1] The latter he found somewhat later in the person of Abú Mansúr bin Muhammad, probably a local magnate, who warmly encouraged him and treated him with the greatest kindness and generosity. This, we may venture to assume, was one of the happiest epochs in the poet's life. He was in the first flush of a great and enduring enthusiasm; the means of gratifying it were in his possession; he held the field, and his material future seemed assured: his noble, rich, and generous patron would see to that. Alas! that patron died—murdered like Dakíkí, but by whom and in what circumstances we know not. The poet was overwhelmed for a time, but he persevered and kept in mind his patron's counsel that the Book of Kings (Sháhnáma) when completed should be dedicated to kings.[2] In course of time the poet found other patrons, notably one Ahmad ibn Muhammad of Chálandsháh, to whom in A.D. 999 he dedicated a complete Sháhnáma. Firdausí was staying with Ahmad when he had the escape from drowning already referred to, and he seems to have been rescued either by Ahmad himself or by Ahmad's son. This passage is not in our printed texts.[3] The poet, however, had never forgotten the advice of his former patron, the beloved Abú Mansúr, and in this same year his opportunity came. The last king of the Sámánid dynasty died and Mahmúd became supreme in Eastern Írán. Henceforth it was to Mahmúd that the poet looked for patronage, and he appears to have left

[1] Prelude, § 10. [2] *Id.* § 11.
[3] NIN, 23, 24.

no stone unturned to gain it. If adulation could have achieved his end he ought to have succeeded. The reader will find a specimen in the present volume.[1] Elsewhere in another elaborate panegyric he says:—

God bless the Sháh, the pride of crown and throne
And signet-ring, bless him whose treasuries groan
With his munificence what while the fame
Of majesty is heightened by his name.

. . . . . .

O'er all the world one carpet hath been placed—
His token nevermore to be effaced—
And on it are a cushion and a seat
For Fazl, son of Ahmad, a man replete
With justice, prudence, rede, and godly fear;
No Sháh before had such a minister.
In his hands is the peace of all the state
For he is good and chief of all the great,
Frank-spoken, with clean hands and single heart;
To serve God and his sovereign is his part.
With this wise upright minister for friend
My far-extending labour reached its end.
I framed this story of the days of yore,
Selected from the book of men of lore,
That it in mine old age might yield me fruit,
Give me a crown dínárs and high repute,
But saw no bounteous worldlord; there was none
Who added to the lustre of the throne.
I waited for a patron patiently—
One whose munificence required no key.

. . . . . .

When I was fifty-eight, and when in truth
I still felt young though I had lost my youth,
A proclamation reached mine ears at last
Whereat care aged and all my troubles pass'd.
It ran:—"Ye men of name who long to find
Some trace of Farídún still left behind!
See bright-souled Farídún alive again
With earth and time for bondslaves. He hath ta'en

[1] Prelude, § 12.

The world by justice and by largessings,
And is exalted o'er all other kings.
Bright are the records of his earlier day,
And may he flourish, root and fruit, for aye."
Now since that proclamation reached mine ear
I wish not any other sound to hear;
In his name have I fashioned this my lay,
And may his end be universal sway.[1]

The reader will note that both in § 12 of the Prelude and in the passage just quoted Firdausí couples Mahmúd and his minister in eulogy. As the Prelude is retrospective, we may venture to assume who that minister was, because as it was written last the reference if inopportune would not have been inserted. There can hardly be a doubt that in both passages the same minister is referred to—Fazl, son of Ahmad.

The passage from which the above extracts are taken is a very important one. It seems to have been penned a few years before the completion of the Sháhnáma, for the poet was over sixty-five at the time. The extracts suggest that he had lately received some definite encouragement, some promise of patronage or reward from Mahmúd or his minister or both, whereupon he wrote this panegyric and prefixed it to the section that he had been engaged on or had taken in hand when the announcement of Mahmúd's accession first reached him. If Mahmúd, who was of Turkman descent, had strong racial proclivities, the section in point hardly seems to be well chosen, for it tells of the final overthrow of Afrásiyáb, the great protagonist of the Turkman race, at the hands of the Íránian Sháh Kai Khusrau. Perhaps Mahmúd had become more Íránian than the Íránians. Such cases are not unknown in history. At all events we know that his minister Fazl, son of Ahmad, or to give him his full title Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl bin Ahmad, had Íránian

[1] V, 1272–1274.

leanings, for he changed the official language for state documents from Arabic to Persian. After his fall his successor, Ahmad Hasan Maimandí, returned to the old arrangement.[1] At the time when the poet wrote the above passage Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl must have been at the height of his power, say about A.D. 1006. We are told on the authority of Al 'Utbí that he was one of the most celebrated of book-students, and Al 'Utbí, who was Mahmúd's secretary, ought to have known.[2] It is very hard to resist the inference that Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl had given the poet encouragement, and that the latter looked to him to secure a fitting reception by Mahmúd of the poem when finished. The poet's idea seems to have been that the Sháhnáma was to be regarded as Mahmúd's memorial, while the profits of his great work were to be devoted to some special object which was to be regarded as his own memorial:—

Of all the things that earn our monarch's praise,
The things of chiefest profit in his days,
This will best serve to keep his memory rife
And live as part and parcel of his life,
And I am hoping to live too till I
Receive his gold that when I come to die
I too may leave my monument with things
Drawn from the treasury of the king of kings.[3]

If the poet put his faith in Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl he was doomed to disappointment. In the meantime we have a lamentation over hopes deferred, royal neglect which may have been intentional or merely unwitting, and active opposition:—

Six times ten thousand couplets there will be
Well ordered—banishers of misery.
For thrice a thousand couplets one may look
In vain as yet in any Persian book,
And if thou cancellest each faulty strain
In sooth five hundred scarcely will remain.

[1] NIN, 25, note. [2] KUR, 396. [3] V, 1730.

That one—a bounteous king and of such worth
And lustre mid the monarchs of the earth—
Should disregard these histories is due
To slanderers and mine ill fortune too.
They have maligned my work, my marketing
Is spoiled through lack of favour with the king,
But when the royal warrior shall read
My pleasant histories with all good heed
I shall be gladdened by his treasures here,
And may no foeman's ill approach him near.
My book may then recall me to his mind
And I the fruitage of my labours find.
Be his the crown and throne while time shall run,
And may his destiny outshine the sun. [1]

At another time he is plunged in despair :—

The dear delights of earth, the sovereign sway,
What boot they? Soon thy rule will pass away.
Blest is the pious mendicant and wise,
Whose ears oft feel the world's rough pleasantries,
For when he passeth he will leave behind
A good name and a good conclusion find.
His portion is in Heaven and in God's sight
He will have honour. Such is not my plight
Who am in wretched case, calamitous,
With all that I possess sent Hellward thus
Beyond recall! No hope in Heaven I see,
My hand is void, both worlds have ruined me! [2]

In moments of disappointment, too, and at periods probably years apart, the poet gives vent to his feelings not only in respect to his own times but even to Mahmúd himself. The expression of them is put into the mouths of some of his characters, but the prophecies are of the sound type made after the event and evidently the poet's own handiwork :—

A time is coming when the world will have
A king that is devoid of understanding,
A king whose gloomy spirit will work woe;
The world will darken 'neath his tyranny

[1] C, 1998. [2] *Id.* 1587.

And good will ne'er be found among his treasures.
He will be ever gathering fresh hosts
To win his crown new fame but in the end
This monarch and his hosts will pass away,
And there will be a change of dynasty.[1]

And again:—

The warrior will despise the husbandman,
High birth and dignity will bear no fruit;
Then men will rob each other, none will know
A blessing from a curse, and secret dealing
Prevail o'er open, while the hearts of men
Will turn to flint, sire will be foe to son
And son will scheme 'gainst sire; a worthless slave
Will be the Sháh, high birth and majesty
Will count for nothing; no one will be loyal.
There will be tyranny of soul and tongue;
A mongrel race—Iránian, Turkman, Arab—
Will come to be and talk in gibberish.[2]

These passages, in Professor Nöldeke's opinion,[3] clearly refer to Mahmúd and to the circumstances of the poet's own time. The latter occurs nearly at the end of the poem, and is put into the mouth of the commander of the Persian host just before the fatal battle of Kádisiyya, A.D. 637.

At length the great work is finished, but the poet's mood is still one of despondence:—

When five and sixty years had passed me by
I viewed my work with more anxiety,
But as my yearning to achieve it grew
My fortune's star receded from my view.
Great men and learnéd Persians had for me
My work all copied out gratuitously
While I sat looking on, and thou hadst said
That I was toiling for my daily bread.
Naught but their praises had I for my part
And, while they praised, I had a broken heart.
The mouths of their old money-bags were tied,

[1] C, 1294. [2] *Id.* 2064. [3] NIN, 26.

Whereat mine ardent heart was mortified.
'Alí Dílam and 'bú Dulaf these two
Helped me to bear mine undertaking thro';
These ardent souls, my fellow townsmen, they
Were kind and sped my work in every way.
Ha'íy son of Kutíb, a Persian he,
Would not take from me and withhold my fee,
But furnished gold and silver, clothes and meat;
From him I got incitement, wings and feet.
Taxation, root and branch, I know not, I
Loll on my quilt at ease. When seventy
And one years of my life had passed me by
The heavens bowed down before my poetry.
For five and thirty years I bore much pain
Here in this Wayside Inn in hope of gain,
But all the five and thirty years thus past
Naught helped; men gave my travail to the blast,
And my hopes too have gone for evermore
Now that mine age hath almost reached fourscore.

. . . . . .

For ever lusty be Mahmúd the king,
His heart still glad, his head still flourishing.
Him both in public and in private I
Have praised so that my words will never die.
Of praises from the great I had my store,
The praises that I give to him are more.
For ever may he live, this prudent king,
And see his undertakings prospering.
I have bequeathed as his memorial
This book, six times ten thousand lines in all.[1]

There are other references by the poet to his work and his hopes concerning it, but it is believed that the most important passages have now been set forth. If then we had no other sources of information than these, what should we gather from them? That the poet in the prime of life succeeded to the work and materials of Dakíkí, and laboured at his task for many years under various patrons but not receiving such recognition as in his own opinion his deserts merited;

[1] C, 2095. The readings of the names of the poet's friends are taken from Nizámí's quotation of this passage. BCM, 79.

that he thought he saw his opportunity in the accession of Mahmûd and did his best to avail himself of it; that he received some encouragement if not from the Sultán himself at least from Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl, the chief minister, and achieved his task early in A.D. 1010; that for some years before that date there had been opposition to him at Court, his work vilified and his character misrèpresented; that these intrigues ultimately prevailed, and that he never received the reward for his labours that a perhaps somewhat too fervid temperament had led him to hope for or expect; that for years after the completion of the poem he still hoped on, was nearly eighty when he finally despaired, but to the last continued to praise Mahmúd.

Now if we seek to look further into the causes of Firdausí's disappointment we have at hand a plausible and even probable explanation, but one for which we have, at present at all events, no direct evidence. Just about the time when the Sháhnáma was completed Mahmúd's chief minister, Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl, fell into disgrace. He had once been in the service of the Sámánids, but when Mahmúd became governor of Khurásán in A.D. 994, his father, Subuktagín, applied to the Sámánid prince, Nuh bin Mansúr, for the services of Abú'l 'Abbás on behalf of his son. Accordingly he became the steward of Mahmúd's household at Nísháp̀úr, and, after Mahmúd's accession, chief minister. He is said to have made use of his position to enrich himself, and his administration is stated to have been so oppressive that Khurásán was devastated and depopulated, but this of course need not be taken too literally. The Sultán, however, became concerned with regard to the diminution of the levies and the falling off in the revenue, and remonstrated with Abú'l 'Abbás, who threatened to resign. In A.D. 1011, after long negotiations, the Sultán, enraged at his conduct, imposed a fine of

100,000 dínárs upon him, and, as he still deferred payment, had him imprisoned and put to the torture. His enemies availed themselves of his disgrace, and of the Sultán's displeasure and absence on one of his numerous campaigns, to have the fallen minister done to death in A.D. 1013.[1]

The suggestion then is that the poet lost his chance owing to the troubles in which the minister became involved just about the time when the Sháhnáma would be ready for presentation to Mahmúd; and when we picture to ourselves the remorseless intrigues of an Oriental court—intrigues sticking at no atrocity and shrinking from no meanness—we can well imagine that if the unfortunate minister really had taken an interest in the poet's work, there would not be wanting those who would only be too willing out of mere spite to strike at the patron through the poet.

However this may be, the latter, indignant at the treatment he had undergone, or smarting under the sense of unmerited neglect, set about writing a Satire on Sultán Mahmúd, of which, according to Nizámí-i-Arúdí, only the following five couplets survived in his days. They run as follows:—

"Yon prater hath grown old," they flung at me,
"In love toward the Prophet and 'Alí."
That love, if I shall speak of it, implies
Five score Mahmúds for me to patronise.
The slave-girl's brat is but a worthless thing
Although its father came to be a king.
Had e'er the Sháh a turn for goodness shown
He would have seated me upon the throne.
Because his kindred is of mean estate
He cannot bear to hear about the great.

In the extant version of the Satire that we follow,[2] which consists of 102 couplets, the above couplets

[1] KUR, 396. Cf. too EHI, ii. 486; iv. 148.
[2] C, 63.

appear not in this order but separately as the 11th, 27th, 83rd, 72nd, and 76th respectively, with some differences of reading. Here they read rather disconnectedly, but have an appropriate context in the extant version of the Satire. We learn from them that one of the charges brought against the poet was that he was a heretic of the sect of the Shí'ites, and this may have weighed with the orthodox Mahmúd. The poet for his part develops the old taunt of the slave who became a Sháh. If how we turn to the extant version of the Satire, and accept it as genuine in spite of what Nizámí says, we get additional and interesting information. The poet speaks of himself as Firdausí of Tús. Tús was formerly a city of much importance in Khurásán, and its ruins are still to be seen some seventeen miles N.N.W. of Mashad. He tells us that he spent thirty years over the Sháhnáma, that it was presented to Mahmúd, who had promised a worthy but gave him a very inadequate reward—little more than one-seventh of what he expected—and that he publicly gave away the whole of it to a street sherbet-seller in payment for a drink. He also informs us that Mahmúd threatened to have him trampled to death by elephants, and he ends by cursing the Sultán.

We now pass on to what Nizámí has to tell us more than a hundred years after the death of the poet.

Abú'l Kásim Firdausí was one of the landed proprietors of Tús. He was a native of a village called Bazh, which formed part of one of the quarters, districts, or suburbs of the city. He was a man of importance and of independent means, which were derived from the income of his land. He had one daughter, and the sole object of his labours on the Sháhnáma was to obtain the funds necessary to provide her with a dowry. When he had completed the

work it was transcribed by 'Alí Dílam and recited by Abú Dulaf. He was much in favour with Ha'íy, son of Kutíba, the governor of the city, who treated him with all consideration in the matter of taxation.

'Alí Dílam transcribed the Sháhnáma in seven volumes, and Firdausí set off for Ghazní with Abú Dulaf. Ahmad Hasan Maimandí, Mahmúd's chief minister, befriended him, and the poem was duly presented to the Sultán, who accepted it. The minister, however, had enemies, who pointed out that Firdausí was a heretic, as some of the verses in his Prelude to the Sháhnáma showed,[1] and the result was that the poet got much less than he expected. He went to the bath in deep chagrin, and on coming out divided the sum that he had received between the bath-man and a sherbet-seller of whom he had bought a drink. Then fearing the wrath of Mahmúd he fled to Harát, where he lay hidden for six months. Mahmúd sent messengers after him to Tús, but not finding him they turned back, on which the poet ventured to go there himself, taking the Sháhnáma with him.[2] Thence he journeyed on to Tabaristán, whose ruler treated him kindly. There Firdausí wrote his Satire on Mahmúd, read it to the chief, and offered to dedicate the Sháhnáma to him instead of to the Sultán. The chief of Tabaristán, however, was himself one of Mahmúd's vassals, and he persuaded the poet to let the dedication stand, and bought the Satire of him for one hundred thousand drachms—a thousand for each couplet. He then destroyed it, and Firdausí himself destroyed his own rough copy, only five verses remaining extant—the five already given. We here append our version of the Satire. Assuming that it

[1] §§ 1 and 7.

[2] If Mahmúd was really seriously offended with Firdausí it seems strange that the latter's estate at Tús was not confiscated on this occasion.

is in essentials the poet's handiwork the reader probably will agree with the prudent chief of Tabaristán in his opinion that the sooner it was suppressed the better.

SATIRE ON SULTÁN MAHMÚD.

Ho! Sháh Mahmúd who hast as victor trod
The climes! if man thou fearest not fear God,
For there were many Sháhs ere thou hadst birth
Who all were crownéd monarchs of the earth
And all of them pre-eminent o'er thee
In treasure, host, throne, crown, and dignity.
They did no act that was not good and right,
Went not about to swindle and to spite,
Dealt with their subjects justly and were naught
If not God's worshippers. They only sought
From time an honoured name and thus to gain
An honoured end; but all good folk disdain
Sháhs that are bound in filthy lucre's chain.
What though the kingship of the world is thine,
Dost ask what boot these whirling words of mine?
Thou hast not seen my heart in its fierce mood,
Thou reck'st not of my sword a-drip with blood
But term'st me faithless, heretic! I am
A lion, and thou callest me a ram!
"Yon ribald hath grown old," men flung at me,
"In love toward the Prophet and 'Alí."
But is there, tell me this, one viler yet
Than he whose heart against 'Alí is set?
These two I serve till Resurrection-morn
E'en if the Sháh should have my body torn
Asunder. I will love these two kings though
The Sháh's sword be above, my head below.
I serve the Prophet's slaves, the dust revere
Upon His mandatary's[1] foot. No fear
Have I for all thy threats:—"Thou shalt be brayed
By elephants and have thy body made
A river Nile," for mine enlightened mind
Place for the love of these two souls shall find

[1] 'Alí.

Within my heart. What said the inspired Lord
Of bidding and forbidding—Heaven's own word?
"I am the City of the Doctrine, he
That is the gateway to it is 'Alí."
I witness that His heart is in that word
As though, as thou may'st say, His voice I heard.
If thou hast mind and wit and rede to hand
By Prophet and 'Alí take up thy stand.
If ill result to thee mine is the breach;
Thus is it, and I practise what I preach.
Thus have I done from birth, thus will I die;
The dust upon the Lion's[1] foot am I.
What others say can make no difference
To me; I never speak but in this sense,
And if the Sháh adopt another strain
His wisdom weigheth not one barley-grain.
When God shall set the Prophet and 'Alí
On royal thrones I, if my poetry
Came from my love to them, shall in the skies
Have five-score like Mahmúd to patronise.
While earth remaineth it will have its lords,
And all that wear the crown shall hear these words:—
"Firdausí—I of Tús—your friend, disclaim
Mahmúd as patron. I wrote in the name
Of the Prophet and 'Alí; for their sake I
Have pierced so many gems of fantasy."
So long as there was no Firdausí here
The fortune of this world of ours was sere,
Yet on this tale of mine thou wouldst not look
Misled by one who vilified my book,
But may all those that vilified my strain
Expect revolving heaven's help in vain.
These stories of the sovereigns of old
Had I in mine own charming language told,
And when my years had almost reached fourscore
My hopes were scattered to the wind. I bore
Here in this Wayside Inn the toil so long
Because I hoped for treasure through my song
Of sixty thousand noble couplets spent
On warlike topics, and their argument
The lasso, scimitar, artillery,
The battle-axe, the falchion brandished high,

[1] 'Alí.

The casque, the mail, the charger's armature,
The wilderness, the ocean, stream and shore,
Wolf, dragon, elephant, and crocodile,
Pard, lion, and 'Afrít, the cunning wile
Of Ghúl, the sorcery of dívs whose cries
Reached heaven, the heroes famed for enterprise
Upon the day of battle (these I sing),
The heroes combating and glorying,
Men too of no mean rank or name obscure
But such as Salm Afrásiyáb and Túr,
Sháh Farídún and Kai Kubád and fell
Zahhák the tyrant and the infidel,
Garshásp and Sám whom Narímán the bold
Begot—world-paladins of mighty mould—
Húshang and Tahmúras the Dív that bound,
With Minúchihr, Jamshíd that Sháh renowned,
Káús and Kai Khusrau with crown upon
His head, and Rustam, and that famous one
Of brazen form,[1] Gúdarz and his delight—
His eighty sons, those Lions of the fight
And horsemen of the plain—great Sháh Luhrásp,
Zarír the captain of the host, Gushtásp,
Jámásp who shone among the host on high
More brightly than the sun doth in the sky,
Dárá son of Dáráb, Bahman, the great
Sikandar—chief of all that ruled the state—
Withal too Sháh Ardshír, Shápúr his son,
Bahrám and Núshírwán the virtuous one.
Such is the famous and exalted throng
That I have made the subject of my song,
All dead for ages but my poetry
Hath caused their names to live again, for I
Have raised these dead, as Jesus did, and made
Their names live, one and all, and I have laid
A servitude upon myself for thee,
O king! to keep thy name in memory.
The homes that are the dwellings of to-day
Will sink 'neath shower and sunshine to decay,
But storm and rain shall never mar what I
Have built—the palace of my poetry.
This story shall be read by every one
Possessed of wisdom while the ages run;

[1] Asfandiyár.

But that was not thy promised recompense,
Nor did I hope reward in such a sense.
A slanderer (my curse upon his head !)
Extracted evil out of what I said
For good, destroyed my credit with the king
And made my glowing coal a frigid thing.
If thou hadst been a judge of honest ways,
And hadst bestowed a thought upon my lays,
Thou wouldst have said that I have paid my dues—
The talent that was given me to use—
In full. My words have made the world to grow
Like Paradise. Before me none could sow
The seed of words. Unnumbered folk no doubt
Flung them in countless multitudes about,
But, though they were so many, up to now
No one hath ever mentioned them, I trow.
For thirty years exceeding toil I bore
And made the Persians live in Persian lore.
Unless the worldlord had close-fisted grown
I should have had a seat upon the throne ;
He would have placed me there, but common sense
Hath never been the monarch's excellence.
Had he himself been royal by descent
He would have heeded royal precedent,
For, had his sire been Sháh, he would ere now
Have set a crown of gold upon my brow,
Or had his mother been a lady I
Had stood in gold and silver coin knee-high ;
But since his kindred are of mean estate
He cannot bear to hear about the great.
The bounty of this Sháh of high degree
Hath altered nine times nine to four times three ![1]
The travail of this Book of Kings I bore
For thirty years that from his treasury's store
The Sháh might recompense me, set me free
From worldly needs and give me high degree
Among my peers. He oped his treasury's door
And gave a sherbet-seller's[2] fee, not more,

[1] Mohl, who has a slightly different text, translates "rien et moins que rien," which he admits to be pure conjecture. To us it seems a reference to the amount expected and the amount received by the poet.

[2] In the original a "fakka"-seller. "Fakka" seems to have been barley-water flavoured with raisins, or else some sort of beer. Cf. the Greek φοῦσκα (Latin *posca*, sour wine).

On whom I spent it in the public way—
A fit recipient of such royal pay!
C. 66 A king devoid of honour, sense of right,
And faith as this is, is not worth a mite.
The slave-girl's brat is but a worthless thing
Although it may be fathered by a king.
To raise the vile that good from them may flow
Is but to lose our thread's end when we sew
Or put a viper in our pouch to grow.
If thou shalt plant a tree of nauseous fruit
In Paradise itself and drench the root,
When moisture is required, from Heaven's own rill
Of purest honey, the old nature still
Will show itself at last; thou wilt procure
Fruit no less nauseous than the fruit before.
If by perfumers' stalls thy steps are bent
Thy clothing will catch somewhat of the scent,
And if thou visitest a charcoal Jack
Thou wilt get naught from him that is not black.
That miscreants should do ill is no strange case;
Hope nothing then from one whose birth is base,
For none can furbish off the gloom of night,
And washing will not make an Ethiop white.
To look for good from an ill stock to rise
Is but to throw the dust in one's own eyes.
The worldlord, if an honoured name he bore,
Would have esteemed right dear this branch of lore
And listened to such various tales as these
Of ancient ways and royal usages,
Would not have met my wishes with disdain
Or let the labour of my life be vain.
I have a purpose in these lofty rhymes—
The Sháh perchance will be advised betimes,
Will recognise what words are, will pay heed
To this his hoary old adviser's rede,
Do to no other poets wrong henceforth
But hold his reputation something worth,
For men will quote till Re-urrection-morn
The injured poet's recompense of scorn.
A suppliant at the Court of God most high
I shall throw dust upon my head and cry:—
"Lord, cause Thy faithful servant's heart to dwell
In light, and burn this miscreant's soul in Hell."

Before resuming our summary of Nizámí's account we should mention that later on the indomitable poet wrote his second great poem, "Yúsuf and Zulíkha." This work is still extant in MS., and a printed edition is understood to be in preparation. He tells us in his Introduction that he wrote it at the suggestion of a high official of the Dílamids with a view of dedicating it to the ruling Dílamid prince. The poet seems to have quitted Tabaristán, where a prolonged stay might have been not without risk both to himself and to his friendly entertainer, and to have journeyed further to the west, where beyond the reach of Mahmúd's wrath (if Mahmúd really concerned himself about the matter at all) he wrote the above-mentioned work.[1] Ultimately he returned to his native city of Tús, and we may conclude this account of the calamity of an author by summarising the rest of what Nizámí has to tell us. He no doubt gives us, as he professes to do, the received tradition of the time. Sultán Mahmúd, induced by the representations of his chief minister (Hasan Maimandí?) ultimately repented of his treatment of the poet. He accordingly gave directions that sixty thousand dínárs' worth of indigo should be carried to Firdausí at Tús with a suitable apology. This was done and the indigo arrived safely, but as the caravan that bore it entered by one gate the poet's corpse was being borne out to burial by another, outside which was a garden belonging to him, and there he was interred, because in the orthodox view of a local preacher he was a heretic, and therefore must not be suffered to lie in the Musulmán Cemetery. He left a daughter —a high-spirited lady—who refused to accept the Sultán's gift, and the money was therefore spent in repairing the hostelry of Cháha, on the road between Marv and Níshápúr. The poet seems to have died

[1] NIN, 27.

A.D. 1020–1021, at the age of about eighty. Nizámí visited his tomb, A.D. 1116–1117.

It has not seemed necessary to the present writer to enter more fully into the interesting subject of the poet's biography. The reader will find ampler details in Professor Nöldeke's invaluable "Iranische National-epos," and in Professor Browne's most useful translation of Nizámí, both of which works are obtainable in a convenient form. It is not worth while to reproduce here the accounts of later biographers—those mentioned at the beginning of the present chapter—and of other writers. Some of their anecdotes will, however, be inserted in appropriate places in the course of this translation. A word of warning should be added. The present writer has confined himself, except where otherwise stated, to the figures given, as to the poet's age, &c., in the two texts from which our translation of the Sháhnáma has been made. They seem to be generally consistent, but other MSS. give other figures, and if their readings are adopted other conclusions naturally follow.

The present writer, as far as he is concerned, would gladly terminate the history of the writing and reception of the Sháhnáma at the point where the poet himself left it in concluding that work; at all events pains has been taken to distinguish Firdausí's own account from that given by others. It only remains to add that late in life when writing "Yúsuf and Zulíkha" he affected to condemn his greatest achievement as a pack of idle tales. Old age, disappointment, and other circumstances may well have contributed to warp his judgment, but we cannot doubt that in his heart of hearts he was as conscious of what constituted his best title to fame as when he penned the concluding words of the Sháhnáma:—

> I shall live on, the seed of words have I
> Flung broad-cast, and henceforth I shall not die.

The Sháhnáma of Firdausí is one of the great epic poems of the world. The author has left on record that it originally consisted of sixty thousand couplets. All existing MSS., however, even when eked out by obvious interpolations, fall short of that number by several thousand. Part has therefore been lost or else the poet spoke in round numbers. At all events enough remains, and to all appearance pretty much as he wrote it. The authorship, so far as the present writer is aware, has never been disputed.

The poem is in rhymed couplets, and its metre—the typical heroic metre of the language in which it is written—may thus be indicated :—

⏑ — — | ⏑ — — | ⏑ — — | ⏑ —

Such a line as

The Pharaohs of Egypt, the Cæsars of Rome,

represents the metre of the original.

The poet wrote in almost pure Persian. The admixture of Arabic is slight, and in all probability would be slighter if we had the Sháhnáma precisely as Firdausí left it. Some Arabic the poet was bound to use—terms, for instance, in connection with his religion—but copyists, it seems probable, are responsible for most of the rest.

The poet's theme is the story of his fatherland and folk, from the Creation to the Muhammadan conquest, set forth in the form of a metrical chronicle. His subject-matter he derived from many sources, mythical, religious, historical, and popular—a classification which of course involves many cross-divisions.

His method, as might be expected, differs widely from Homer's. The contrast is in fact striking. Homer effectually hides his own personality. He plunges into the middle of his subject, and makes the period of his action as brief as possible. Selecting one central

motive he weaves round it only so much of the subject-matter at his disposal as he can employ with tolerable consistency. His web is closely woven, and the workmanship so exquisite that comparatively few indications are left to betray the nature of the raw material.

Firdausí, on the other hand, takes us into his confidence from the first. In direct violation of the Horatian precept he begins from Leda's egg and earlier, and the period of his action extends over thousands of years. He uses all the epic material, good, bad, and indifferent, on which he can lay hands. His web is open-work and its design unsymmetrical. He makes no secret of his method, but tells us what his materials are and how he obtained them. He shows us in fact his loom in action, and calls our attention to the bright, many-coloured threads of myth, romance, and history which are being woven therein.

It will be readily understood that the method of the Eastern poet leads to inconsistencies and difficulties, chronological and otherwise, for which the reader should be prepared. He will find, for instance, in the mythical portions of the poem at least, the chief heroes living on through successive ages; described as old and yet fighting with all the vigour of early manhood; dropping out of sight and apparently forgotten only to reappear in their pristine vigour later on. The explanation is twofold. In the first place several of the characters of the poem were originally divine or semi-divine beings, and though introduced to us as human have in some cases not wholly lost their superhuman attributes. And in the second place the popular mythology was not, and was not designed to be, consistent. It told legends of the same hero, assigning them to different reigns, ages, and localities. A Western poet would have taken

them all and forced as much as suited him into the mould of a brief action; the Eastern poet takes them at full length, and inserts them where he finds them, wholly regardless of the fact that by so doing he extends life far beyond the span of mortals.

The poem is divided into reigns. Of these there are forty-nine, and they with one dynasty, which is reckoned as a single reign, make up the fifty heads under which the subject-matter of the poem is disposed. The reigns are those of the mythic or historic Sháhs or kings of Persia, who are divided into four dynasties: I. The Pishdádian, of ten Sháhs, and lasting 2441 years. II. The Kaiánian, of ten Sháhs, and lasting 732 years. III. The Ashkánian, which is reckoned as one reign, lasting 200 years. IV. The Sásánian, of twenty-nine Sháhs, and lasting 501 years. The space of time covered is therefore 3874 years.

The poem may also be divided into two periods—a mythic and a historic. This distinction is based not so much on the nature of the subject-matter as on the names of the chief characters. At a certain point in the poem the names cease to be mythic and become historic. The Mythic Period extends from the beginning of the narrative down to the reigns of the last two Sháhs of the Kaiánian dynasty. These and the remainder of the poem form the Historic Period. The Sháhs in question are Dárá, son of Dáráb, better known as Darius Codomanus, and Sikandar—Alexander the Great.

The chief characters of the poem are:—

I. The personified powers of good and evil. The religion of the ancient Persians, from which they became converted to Muhammadanism, was that known as Fire-worship, Dualism, or Zoroastrianism. These may be taken to represent roughly three aspects of its growth and development. It was called Fire-worship from its chief visible object of adoration—a very ancient cult;

Dualism from its chief tenet—the belief that the universe owed its existing form to the opposing creations and ceaseless conflicts of two supernatural beings, a good and an evil, Urmuzd and Áhriman;[1] and Zoroastrianism from its legendary prophet, who may be taken to typify its priestly or ceremonial element. Urmuzd and Ahriman pervade the whole poem, and all that happens for good or ill is attributed either directly or indirectly to the one or the other. They are assumed to be constantly engaged in strife with each other, and especially on the battlefield of the world, where the struggle is carried on chiefly by means of the forces, principalities, and powers which they have called into being, or whose actions they inspire.

If the poet had confined himself to the use of the names Urmuzd and Áhriman this antagonism would have been much more marked. He was probably placed, however, in a very difficult position, not only as a Muhammadan himself but also as a poet eager for recognition at the hands of a fanatically Muhammadan Sultán. The result is a compromise. He seldom uses the word Urmuzd, but in its place such terms as Maker of the world, World-lord, the All-mighty, the righteous Judge or simply God, but hardly ever the Muhammadan Allah. On the other hand he employs the expression Áhriman with great frequency, often substituting for it, however, the word Dív, which may be rendered Fiend, and occasionally the name of the Muhammadan evil principle Iblís. Practically his conception of the good principle is Muhammadan in all but the name, while his evil principle is no longer the formidable Zoroastrian Áhriman, but approximates

[1] There is a tendency among modern Zoroastrians and some scholars to modify or even deny the dualism, but to do this is to deprive Zoroastrianism of its most characteristic feature, and its best title to be considered one of the great religions of the world. See DFKHP, ii. 187; HEP, 303–305.

rather to the Muhammadan Iblís, or to the Devil of the Bible. This being premised, however, it is proposed to retain the expressions Urmuzd and Áhriman in the Introduction, as being on the whole the most suitable and convenient, and of course in the poem itself wherever they occur.

II. The Sháhs and other kings or heroes. These, so far as they are historical, may be left to speak for themselves, but those that are mythical need a word of explanation. The dualistic conception of the universe, while it tended to exalt Urmuzd and Áhriman, did so at the expense of the other deities of the ancient nature-worship who gradually became grouped in inferior capacities, according to the popular conceptions of them, round one or other of the two great principles, the beneficent round Urmuzd and the maleficent round Áhriman. In the course of time many of them came to be regarded as ancient earthly rulers and heroes, and as such they are represented in the poem, the good for the most part as Íránian and the evil as those of other races. All the chief mythical characters were once themselves gods or demigods, or were credited with such ancestors in tradition.

Direct supernatural agency is, however, infrequent in the Sháhnáma. On one side we have Urmuzd, who sometimes intervenes by his messenger and agent the angel Surúsh, and on the other Áhriman, who acts by means of his instruments the dívs, or his adherents the warlocks and witches. We have instances of white magic as well as of black. The fabulous Símurgh too—a bird somewhat resembling the roc of the "Arabian Nights," but endowed with wisdom and articulate speech—plays an important part. Dreams, especially those in which the dead appear, are regarded as veridical, and the evil eye is much dreaded. Presentiments are held to be authentic, and use is made of amulets, elixirs, and divining-cups. The most potent agent throughout

is destiny, which is represented as God's purpose with respect to man as revealed in the heavens by the aspects of the stars and planets. There is no more impressive picture in the poem than that which the poet gives us of the remorseless process of the sky, whose revolutions gradually grind down the strongest, and fill the vulgar with amaze at what they term the turns of fortune. To the sage and reader of the stars, however, the future is spread out like a book, and the astrologer, with his planispheres, astrolabes, calculations of nativities, and predictions generally, plays a considerable part in the poem. Destiny, as represented to us by the poet, is made up of two distinct elements which he does not attempt to reconcile—the Muhammadan and the Zoroastrian. The former may be summed up for the reader in two texts from the Bible:—"I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am the Lord, that doeth all these things;"[1] and "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"[2]

The Zoroastrian conception is entirely different. Urmuzd and Áhriman are as distinct as light from darkness, and a hard and fast line is drawn between good and evil, whether physical or moral. Light, immortality, health, and all that is good in the worlds of mind and matter proceed from Urmuzd; darkness, death, disease, and all that is evil from Áhriman. Urmuzd created man and fashioned the twelve houses of the heavens that they might pour down their kindly influence upon him; Áhriman broke into the creation of Urmuzd and created the planets to run counter to the stars and cross their purposes. Destiny, therefore, from this point of view, being the resultant of two opposing forces, is an extremely logical deduction well borne out by the events of history and the

[1] Isaiah xlv. 7. [2] Job ii. 10.

incidents of life to an Eastern eye, but corresponds rather to what we should call fortune than to absolute fate. The Zoroastrian view, which is that of the poet's authorities, predominates over the Muhammadan, which is that of his religion. The practical result is that in the poem the sky is looked upon as the ultimate arbiter of human affairs, and often as acting wantonly and capriciously with the ruthlessness of a celestial Juggernaut. Yet the poet and his characters never fail to appeal to destiny proper on occasions when it suits them so to do, he to justify the ways of God to man, and they to make excuse for evil done or the doing of it. "It was so decreed," pleads the evil-doer; "And so was the penalty," replies the avenger. At other times again the poet seems to hold that all is hopeless confusion, and that we cannot tell head from tail or top from bottom.

The leading motive of the Sháhnáma, so far as it can be said to have one, is Áhriman's envy of man —the creation of Urmuzd. The first attempt of the evil principle to destroy mankind once for all, in the person of their great progenitor, having failed, his next is to seduce them from their allegiance to their Creator, and in this he is largely successful; race becomes opposed to race, the faithful followers of Urmuzd are persecuted by the perverts of Áhriman, and recurring acts of provocation or revenge form a series of subsidiary motives which serve to keep alive the ancient feud. These are most prominent in the earlier portion of the Mythic period, towards the end of which a new motive is introduced by the advent of the great prophet of Urmuzd—Zarduhsht or Zoroaster. Side by side with this outward visible struggle there is the inward, invisible one going on in the mind of the individual. This is more insisted on in the Historic period where the moral aspects of the struggle are discoursed on at large, and the deadly sins are

personified in accordance to Zoroastrian theology as dívs or fiends in the service of Áhriman, who strive to get the mastery over the soul of man.

The historical relations of the Íránians with other Indo-European peoples, with the Semites and with the Túránians, as sketched briefly in the previous chapter, are indicated in the poem by the mythical legends of Zahhák and of the three sons of Farídún and their descendants. Zahhák represents the idolatrous element in the poem, and therefore the Semites in particular, who were the most idolatrous race with whom the Íránians came into contact. The Assyrians were notoriously idolatrous, and so were the Arabs up to the days of Muhammad. In the poem all idol-worshippers, whether of Semitic race or not, are regarded as descendants of Zahhák. The eldest son of Farídún—Salm—represents the western division of the Indo-European race; the second son Túr the Túránian, and the youngest son Íraj the Western Aryan or Íránian. The legendary accounts in the poem of Zahhák's conquest of Írán, of his overthrow by Farídún, of the partition of the world by the latter between his three sons, of the murder of Íraj by his two elder brothers, and of the great feud which thus originated, really set forth the historical relations of three of the great races of mankind as seen, from the point of view of the descendants of Íraj, through the haze of myth and legend. As to the comparative importance of these relations to the Íránians, native tradition has no hesitation in assigning the first place to the representatives of Túr, the second to those of Zahhák, and the third to those of Salm; and accordingly in the poem the struggles of the Íránians with the Túránians occupy more space than those with all other races combined. Yet the bitterest feud is with Zahhák. In other cases it is a family quarrel, but Zahhák is of another stock—a man forbid. However,

all the greatest heroes of the poem spring from unions between members of races thus antagonistic. The three sons of Farídún marry the daughters of an Arab king, and their supposed descendants are therefore of mixed race. Rustam is from Zahhák upon his mother's side. Siyáwush and Kai Khusrau both have Túránian mothers. Asfandiyár and Sikandar have Rúman mothers.[1]

We have also to note that, according to Íránian tradition, Urmuzd did not leave himself altogether without witness even in the lands and peoples most given over to Áhriman. In the case of the Arabs we have the dynasty of Al Munzir, which is always represented as being friendly to the Íránians. This dynasty ruled at Hira. In the case of the Hindus we have the dynasty of Kaid, which is always kindly and helpful. In the case of the Túránians the tendency to goodwill is very marked in some of the characters. One of Afrásiyáb's own brothers becomes an arrant traitor in his zeal for the Íránian interest, and suffers for it at the hand of his justly indignant sovereign. The most striking instance, however, is that of the great and good Pírán, Afrásiyab's cousin, counsellor, and commander-in-chief. Though his loyalty to his own master is absolutely stainless and unimpeached, he always shows himself most friendly and generous to the Íránians, striving for peace and for a better understanding between the two races. He lives to see his honest endeavours foiled and his well-meant counsels turn out ill, but his honesty is so transparent and recognised that even the fierce tyrant whom he serves,

[1] History and legend alike throw considerable doubt on the paternity of Alexander the Great (Sikandar). Íránian patriotism avails itself of this fact to explain that Philip married his daughter to Sháh Dáráb, that Dáráb took a dislike to her and sent her back to her father, at whose court she gave birth to Alexander, who was brought up as Philip's own son. Íránian *amour propre* is thus saved, as the great conqueror is made out to be an Íránian himself—the eldest born of Sháh Dáráb.

and who suffers most for having followed his advice, has hardly a word to say against him, and he only gives up the leadership of the host with death. It is a well paid compliment by the poet to the Turkman race. It was no doubt his own contribution toward a good understanding, and happily he could not foresee the horrors which the eleventh and subsequent centuries held in store for Írán at the hands of the nations of the North.

For the preservation of the subject-matter of the Sháhnáma we are chiefly indebted to two of the classes into which Firdausí tells us ancient Íránian society was divided—the priestly class and the agricultural class — in other words the Magi and the Dihkáns. The Magi were the priests of the true Medes or Madá, among whom they formed a caste or tribe. Originally fire-priests, as their own name for themselves—Áthravans, literally "fire-men"—shows,[1] they became closely associated with, even if they did not originate, the Dualism, and Zoroastrianism of later times. Antiquity, which liberally credited them with all the attributes of ancient priesthood, knew them as the Magi—the great or mighty,[2] and later ages are indebted to them for the potent words "magic" and "magician." In their historical seat in Atropatene, or in the modern form of the word Ázarbíján (which has been variously explained to mean the land of the seed, of the descent of, or that guards the fire), and still more in their legendary home in Karabagh, they dwelt in the neighbourhood of scenes of natural marvel. Earthquakes are frequent there, mud-volcanoes, hot springs, and naphtha wells abound. Flames issuing from clefts in the rocks have been ablaze from time immemorial, and in autumn the exhalations from the soil form a phosphorescence that at night wraps whole districts in sheets of harmless flame. Even in parts of the Caspian the vapours bubble up,

[1] DZA, i. li, 1st ed.

[2] Skeat, Etym. Dict., *s.v.*

may be ignited and will go on burning, over several square yards of water till a gust of wind extinguishes them. The scene from all accounts is at times sufficiently impressive even to the modern eye, and we can easily imagine what fire in its purest form and highest expression—clear, smokeless, lambent flames, burning on unfed apparently and self-sustaining century after century—must have been to the unrationalistic gaze of primitive antiquity. In the presence of those flames all other fires must have seemed but "broken lights." Elsewhere they were hard to kindle, needed constant care, and were dimmed by smoke and vapours, but here they burned as in the Burning Bush. It was no wonder that the place came to be looked upon as "Holy Ground," and that a Cult of Fire grew up there in the dim and distant past. We can well imagine too how famous the priesthood of such a Cult would become amid such surroundings. The priest of ancient times was the man of letters, the sage, the leech, the astrologer and the man of occult lore and grammarye, and this priesthood dwelt in a region which is not even now robbed of all its ancient glamour by the fact that it is the scene of the greatest petroleum industry in the world. Here Prometheus stole the fire from heaven and paid the penalty in some Caucasian gorge. Along it from north to south lay a great highway of the nations, across it from east to west ran one of the great trade routes, and the riches of India were borne from Kábul to Balkh, from Balkh down the Oxus to the Caspian,[1] and thence through the land of Medea and of the Golden Fleece to the Euxine and the west. It is of course impossible to affirm that so widespread a cult as Fire-worship had its origin in one particular locality, but we shall

[1] The Oxus in ancient times flowed into the Caspian instead of into the Aral Sea as at present.

be safe in stating that here was a most important centre of it, and in claiming for its priests a proportionate status and sanctity.[1] We have already seen that Írán is a land of sharp contrasts of physical good and evil. There the kindly reticences and concealments of nature, the blue haze of distance and the melting of line into line, are absent, there is no neutral territory, no common meeting-ground; all is clear, sharp, well defined and recognisable beyond the possibility of mistake and at a glance as good or evil. In the regions south of the Caucasus these contrasts are accentuated, and there, it would seem, grew up Dualism suggested and justified by its surroundings.

The doctrines of the Magi, which it is beyond our scope to enter into except incidentally and by way of illustration, appear in early times to have been restricted, if not to the Magi themselves, at all events to the Medes whose priests they were. It was not until nearly the end of the sixth century before the Christian era and after the suicide of Cambyses, the son of Cyrus the Great, that the Magi first became supreme in the vast empire which the latter had founded, for now we have evidence that neither he nor his son was the enthusiastic proselytiser of Zoroastrianism, that they were both formerly supposed to be, but at most tolerated it along with the other faiths of their world-wide empire.[2] After the death of Cambyses, however, the Magi rose to power in the person of the Magus Gaumata—the false Smerdis of the Greeks—who seized the vacant throne and began, as we learn from the inscriptions of Darius Hystaspis, his slayer and successor, to overthrow the temples of

[1] For an account of the natural phenomena of these regions see KA, i. 44, and Marvin, "The Region of the Eternal Fire," ch. xi., where many interesting passages are collected. The phenomena are most striking to the north of Karabagh at Baku, the peninsula of Apsheron and the island of Sviatoi (Holy Island) lying off it.

[2] SHC, 497.

the gods in his iconoclast zeal.[1] As Darius further informs us that he restored these temples, and also at the same time describes himself as a worshipper of Urmuzd,[2] we may assume that it was in the course of his reign that Zoroastrianism became the state-religion of the Persian empire. He also appears about B.C. 505 to have adopted the Zoroastrian calendar in the place of the old Persian one that he had used up till then, and this fact goes to support the assumption made above.[3] The Magophonia or slaughter of the Magi mentioned by Herodotus,[4] which has sometimes been adduced as a proof that they could not have been supreme in Persia so early as the times of Darius Hystaspis,[5] is not really opposed to this view. It is pretty evident that the Magophonia was not aimed against the Magi in general, but was merely an annual celebration of the overthrow of one particular Magus—the impostor and usurper Gaumata—and his personal followers.[6] Whether the Magi, in spite of the high position they had gained, ever succeeded in making their doctrines popular with the masses of the first Persian empire may well be doubted. One at least of the successors of Darius—Artaxerxes II. (B.C. 404–361)—seems to have relapsed into something very like idolatry,[7] and with the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great the power of the Magi waned for a time.

Rightly or wrongly Zoroastrian tradition couples Alexander with Zahhák and Afrásiyáb as one of the three arch enemies of the faith.[8] With the intro-

[1] RP, vii. 89-92. [2] *Id.* [3] WPT, v. xliv.
[4] Herod. iii. 79. [5] RSM, 636, note.
[6] DHA, v. 194. [7] DZA, ii. 53.
[8] *Id.* i. xlviii. This notion seems to have been firmly fixed in the minds of the faithful. We are told that in the year A.D. 1511 Zoroastrians resident in Persia wrote to co-religionists in India a letter in which they stated "that never since the rule of Kaiomars had they suffered more than what they were then undergoing. In sooth, they declared that they were more oppressed than their race had ever been at the hands of the tyrants Zohak, Afrasiab, Tur and Alexander." DFKHP, i. 56.

duction of Greek ideas, Greek science and Greek polytheism, there can be no doubt that the bulk of the population relapsed into idolatry, if indeed it had ever emerged. During the next five centuries the Magi must have had much ado to keep alive the doctrines, ritual, and sacred traditions of their faith. The seductions of Greek civilisation were followed by the brutalities of Parthian barbarism, and any modification of these was, during the first centuries at all events of Parthian rule, in the direction of Greek culture. The Parthian monarchs describe themselves as philhellenic on their coins. The Magi, however, were well equipped for the struggle. They had a great reputation. They held a faith in many respects much in advance of their times, and one too that found its justification in the strange natural phenomena and sharp contrasts of physical good and evil that characterise Írán. They had kept alive too, at a time when ancient Persian was passing into rapid phonetic decay, the ancient language of their race—the Median—with its inflections and archaisms, as will appear later on. Lastly, they were a priesthood practising the peculiar custom of Khvaitúk-das, or next of kin marriage, which, though most repugnant to the sentiments of mankind at large, must certainly have tended to preserve their faith from the dangerous external and foreign influences which an indiscriminate practice of marriage would have entailed. That the Magi practised Khvaitúk-das in the days of the Parthian monarchy we may learn from Catullus.[1] The three principal seats of the Magi seem to have been at Shíz, Rai, and Balkh. Shíz, the Persian Gazn,

[1] Nascatur Magus ex Gelli matrisque nefando
conjugio, et discat Persicum haruspicium.
Nam Magus ex matre et gnato gignatur oportet,
si vera est Persarum impia relligio.
Carmen, lxxxix., ed. C. H. Weise.

For Khvaitúk-das see WPT, ii. 389. Cf. GHP, i. 89.

is to be looked for at Takht-i-Sulaiman near the southern frontier of Ázarbíján. It contained the famous fire-temple of Ázarakhsh, which appears to be a contraction of Ázar-i-Zarduhsht, or the fire of Zarduhsht, who is supposed to have instituted it. To this temple it was the custom of the Sháhs of Persia in pre-Muhammadan times to make pilgrimages afoot.[1] Rai, which was near Tihrán, seems to have been the centre of a priestly principality of great antiquity, whose priest-prince was known as the Zarduhsht. It was finally destroyed by the Muhammadans.[2] Balkh was the scene of Zarduhsht or Zoroaster's most successful missionary effort, which led to the conversion of Sháh Gushtásp. Here, too, the prophet is said to have been slain when the city was taken by the Túránian king Arjásp. Internal evidence seems to show that Firdausí used traditions emanating from each of the above centres in the Sháhnáma.

Of the early literature of the Magi we can only assume that the theogonies or sacred hymns which they chanted in the days of Herodotus[3] were such as we find in their extant scriptures, just as we find the peculiar rites and ceremonies, which he describes as being practised by them,[4] still in operation at a much later date. The tradition with regard to the literature is as follows: The original scriptures were revealed to Zoroaster by Urmuzd. Zoroaster preached them to Sháh Gushtásp, whose capital was at Balkh. Gushtásp ordered the original to be deposited in the treasury of Shapígán and copies to be made and disseminated, one of which was laid up in the fortress of documents. When "the evil destined villain Alexander" invaded Írán the copy in the fortress of documents was burnt; that in the treasury of

[1] DZA, i. xlix, 1st ed.
[2] *Id.* xlviii.
[3] Herod. i. 132.
[4] *Id.* 140.

Shapígán fell into Alexander's hands and was translated by his command into Greek.[1] King Valkash ordered a collection to be made of the scriptures, which in his days existed in Írán in a scattered state owing to the disruption caused by the Macedonian conquest.[2] Ardshír, the son of Pápak, who overthrew the Parthians and restored the Íránian monarchy, also made a collection of the scriptures. He employed for that purpose the high-priest Tausar, who reproduced a similitude of the original as it had existed in the treasury of Shapígán.[3] Sháṕur, the son of Ardshír, made a collection of writings of a non-religious character dealing with medicine, astronomy, and other scientific subjects that had been scattered among the Hindus and Rúmans, and ordered them to be incorporated with what had already been brought together, which was done.[4] Sháṕur, the son of Hurmuzd, instituted a tribunal for the determination of all points of disputed doctrine. These points were settled by ordeal, and thenceforth the Sháh proclaimed and insisted on uniformity.[5]

With regard to this account legend places the birthplace and home of Zoroaster in Írán-vej.[6] Here on the Mountain of the Holy Questions he met Urmuzd face to face, and received from him in a series of dialogues the tenets of the faith. Here too the prophet was assailed by the demon Búiti sent by Áhriman, and subsequently tempted by the latter in person. Both were, however, worsted, and Zoroaster began his missionary career.[7] His great success seems to have been at Balkh, one of the chief centres of Aryan civilisation. This we may interpret as meaning that Zoroastrianism spread from West to East along the line of the great trade-route. The extant portions of the Zoroastrian

[1] WPT, iv. xxxi. [2] *Id.* 413. [3] *Id.* xxxi.
[4] *Id.* 414. [5] *Id.* [6] DZA, i. 3, notes.
[7] WPT, i. 141.

scriptures have many allusions to Balkh and Eastern Irán generally, and in the later part of the Mythic period of the poem the scene is shifted thither. With regard to Alexander the Great the legend is that he burnt these scriptures, which were written on twelve thousand ox-hides, at Persepolis.[1] During the domination of the Parthians Írán was broken up into a number of small tributary principalities under native chiefs, some of whom seem to have maintained a Magian priesthood and sacred fires of their own.[2]

It is possible that it may have been the rise of local Zoroastrian cults with divergent doctrines and ritual that led King Valkash, in his capacity of overlord, to make a collection of the scriptures with a view to the establishment of a canon and uniformity. Valkash himself has been well identified with the Parthian king Vologeses I. (A.D. 50–78), whose brother Tiridates is known to have been a Magus.[3] A letter written by Tausar to explain and justify his proceedings in regard to the reform of the faith is still in existence.[4] Ardshír, the son of Pápak, who employed him, was the first Sháh (A.D. 226–240) of the Sásánian dynasty and was himself a Magus.[5] The legendary destruction of the original scriptures was of course the excuse for adding to the canon in the reign of Shápur I. (A.D. 240–271) by restoring to their proper place the translations made under Alexander. With Shápúr II. (A.D. 309–379) about A.D. 330 the canon was traditionally closed,[6] but as a matter of fact there was some amount of addition and revision as late as Chosroes I. (A.D. 531–579), after the disturbance to the faith caused by Mazdak.[7]

The language of the scriptures is commonly but

[1] DZA, i. xliii. [2] *Id.* xliv. [3] *Id.* xxxix.
[4] *Id.* xli. [5] *Id.* [6] *Id.* xlvii. [7] WPT, iv. xlii.

incorrectly known as Zend. It seems almost certain that really it should be known as Median.[1] Zend, *i.e.* Median, as preserved in its scriptures, and ancient Persian, as preserved in the inscriptions of the Achaemenids, are two sister-languages collaterally related to Sanscrit. How and when Zend became extinct, whether it still survives in a modified form in some modern dialect such as the Kúrd, does not seem to have been yet determined; but the existence of the Zandavasta indicates that it remained known to and used by the Magi in its inflectional form long after its sister-language the Persian had lost most of its inflections and had become greatly simplified. Zend may thus be regarded as being during the five centuries and a half which elapsed between the death of Darius Codomanus and the accession of Ardshír Pápakán the sacred language of the Magi—one known only to themselves and holding with them very much the same position as Sanscrit did among the Brahmans of India. During this period ancient Persian was itself being converted into middle Persian or Pahlaví.[2] Pahlaví, it should be explained, is the same word as Parthian, and in this connection means not the language spoken by the Parthians themselves, but that used under their rule by their Persian or Iránian

[1] "La comparison," says the late Professor Darmesteter in the work in which he seems to have expressed his clearest views on the subject, "des textes avestéens avec ce que les anciens nous disent des croyances et des pratiques des Mages prouve que l'Avesta nous présente la croyance des Mages du temps d'Hérodote, d'Aristote, de Théopompe; d'autre part, les anciens sont unanimes à entendre par Mages les prêtres de la Médie. Il suit de là, par le témoignage externe des classiques joint au témoignage intrinsèque des livres zends et de la tradition native, que l'Avesta est l'œuvre des Mages, que le *zend est la langue de la Médie ancienne*, et que l'on aurait le droit de remplacer le nom impropre de *langue zende* par le terme de *langue médique*." DEI, i. 12.*

[2] WPT, i. xi.

* The italics are Professor Darmesteter's.

subjects.[1] To the people at large in Sásánian times the language in which the inscriptions of Darius Hystaspis and his successors had been written, and that of the Zoroastrian scriptures compiled by Tausar and others, were alike unintelligible. It accordingly became the custom in making copies to append a Pahlaví version, paraphrase, or comment on the original text. The scriptures themselves were known as the Avasta, and all comments thereon, whether in the original language or in Pahlaví, were known as the Zend or Zand. The chief Zand was of course the Pahlaví version of the Avasta, and the two combined became known as the Avasta and Zand, or more commonly as the Zandavasta.[2] Like the Bible it preserved in a literary form all that survived in the traditions of a race, and these were grouped round and told in connection with a line or lines of demigods or heroes, whose names show that they were originally those of the beneficent and maleficent impersonations of the ancient nature-worship of the Aryan people, before it broke up into its Indian and Iránian divisions. The names referred to are common in a somewhat altered form both to the Zandavasta and to the ancient Sanscrit hymns of India—the Vedas.[3] We may regard the traditions of the Zandavasta as essentially Magian; they were destined, however, to undergo a remarkable development and expansion in other hands.

The triumph of Zoroastrianism, the translation of the Zandavasta into Pahlaví, *i.e.* into the vernacular, and the consequent diffusion of the traditions of the Magi throughout Irán occurred at an epoch when five and a half centuries of alien rule (B.C. 331–A.D. 226)

[1] WPT, i. xii. Persians of all times seem always to have known their own language as Parsí. DEI, i. 38.

[2] DZA, i. xxxi, note 2.

[3] See for instance DHA, v. chapters 5 and 10.

had obliterated all but the vaguest reminiscences of the first Persian empire and the house of Achaemenes. The consequence was that the mythical demigods of the Zandavasta came to be regarded in Sásánian times as the historic Sháhs of the Iránian race. These and what was recorded of them in the Zandavasta formed a convenient epic framework whereon to hang legends of Assyrian oppression, Arab raids, Túránian invasions, wars with the West, the deeds of national or local heroes, and all the miscellaneous products of popular tradition and imagination. The development of the legends of the Zandavasta accordingly went on apace, and the chief agents in the process were the Dihkáns. This was the name given to the rural landowners of Írán. Firdausí himself seems to have been the son of a Dihkán. All the world over the rural populations are the depositories of national tradition. A notable instance occurred only so long ago as the last century when Dr. Elias Lönnrot, after years of wandering among the remotest districts of Finland, dwelling with the peasantry and taking down from their lips all that they knew of their popular songs, ultimately succeeded in collecting nearly twenty-three thousand verses which, arranged by him and divided into fifty runes, now form the national Finnish epic known as the Kalewala.[1] Much the same process went on in Írán at an earlier date. Traditions based on the Zandavasta were recited in the halls of the chiefs, at village festivals and at street-corners—a custom still obtaining in Persia—till in time the word Dihkán came to have a well recognised secondary meaning—that of professional story-teller, rustic bard, or wandering minstrel. In the course of the Sásánian dynasty these traditions were collected and put into writing. The result was variously known as the Bástán, Khudái, and Sháh Náma, with the respective meanings of History of

[1] *Ency. Brit.* ix. 219.

the Past, of the Lords, and of the Kings. In Baisinghar Khán's Preface already referred to there is an account of the Bástán-náma which may thus be summarised. Sháh Núshírwán collected the traditions and deposited the MSS. in his library. Yazdagird, the last of the Sásánians, employed the Dihkán Dánishwar to catalogue and supplement these histories and arrange them in chronological order from the reign of Gaiúmart to that of Khusrau Parwíz. At the time of the Muhammadan conquest of Persia they were sent to 'Umar, the commander of the faithful, who had them translated and only partially approved of their contents. In the general division of the Persian spoil the books fell into the hands of the Abyssinians, who presented them to King Jasha, who had them translated and highly commended them. They became well known in his dominions and in Hind, whence they were brought by Ya'kúb Lais, who commanded Abú Mansúr, son of Abdu'r-Razzák, to transcribe into Persian what Dánishwar the Dihkán had told in Pahlaví, and complete the history from the time of Khusrau Parwíz to the end of the reign of Yazdagird. Abú Mansúr instructed an officer of his father's, Su'úd, son of Mansúr Alma-'mari, in conjunction with four others—Táj, son of Khurásání of Harát, Yazdándád, son of Shápúr of Sístán, Máhwí, son of Khurshíd of Níshápúr, and Shádán, son of Barzín[1] of Tús—to undertake the task. When the house of the Sámánids came into power they took the greatest interest in the work thus translated, and entrusted it to the poet Dakíkí to put into verse. When he had written one or two thousand couplets he was murdered by his slave, and thus the matter remained till the days of Mahmúd, who encouraged Firdausí to complete the work.

[1] C has Sulaiman son of Núrín—a mistake or misprint. Cf. NT, xxv.

As Baisinghar Khán's preface dates from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, and contains much that is obviously romantic, it is needful to receive the above account with all caution. Even when we have rejected the story of King Jasha and the Abyssinians we are still confronted by a chronological impossibility. Ya'kúb, the son of Lais the coppersmith, died in A.D. 878. Abú Mansúr, who had the work of the Dihkán Dánishwar translated, was a brother of Muhammad, son of Abdu'r-Razzák, and this Muhammad was prince of Tús in the middle of the tenth century,[1] in the days when Firdausí was growing up. Ya'kúb and Abú Mansúr were therefore not contemporaries. Ya'kúb had worked in his father's shop as a youth, he then became a robber-chief, and finally fought his way to what was practically the lordship of Írán. As a native of Sístán, the home of a race whose warlike proclivities were symbolised in the legendary exploits and character of the national hero of Írán, Rustam, or as the founder of a new dynasty, for political reasons he may have taken an interest in the old traditions; but he could not have commissioned Abú Mansúr to do the work for him, and it will be safer to dismiss the notion that he interested himself in the compilation of the Dihkán Dánishwar as highly problematical. On the other hand, the statement in Baisinghar Khán's preface that Abú Mansúr did have a Sháhnáma compiled is confirmed by the learned Abú Raihán Muhammad bin 'Ahmad Albírúní (A.D. 973–1048) in his "Chronology of Ancient Nations."[2] Again we may be somewhat sceptical as to whether a Dihkán named Dánishwar ever existed, but we may concede that the ancient traditions were collected and edited by some learned (dánishwar) Dihkán and indeed by many such.

[1] NT, xxiv.

[2] Eng. trans. by Dr. E. Sachau, 119.

The names of the five men employed by Abú Mansúr are all Persian, and the men themselves were in all probability Magi, for none but they would be likely to know Pahlaví in the tenth century. One of the five, Shádán son of Barzín, is mentioned by Firdausí as his authority for the story of the introduction into Persia of Bidpai's Fables in the reign of Núshírwán.[1] Dakíkí, the poet who was first entrusted with the task of versifying the Sháhnáma, was a fire-worshipper, as four lines of his bear witness:—

> "Of all of this world's good and ill
> Four things Dakíkí chooseth still—
> Girl's ruby lips, the sound of lyre,
> The blood-red wine, the Faith of Fire."

Firdausí tells us in his Prelude, § 10, that when on Dakíkí's murder he determined to carry on the work himself he had great difficulty in obtaining the needful materials for the purpose, and was for a while nonplussed by want of them. His statement seems to require some explanation, for, in addition to the considerable Pahlaví literature then extant, the collections made by learned Dihkáns had been translated into Arabic, and were obtainable in numerous histories in that language. Albírúní tells us that the poet Abú-'Alí Muhammad bin 'Ahmad Albalkhí in *his* Sháhnáma refers to the authors of five such separate histories as his authorities.[2] If, however, we accept Nöldeke's view that Firdausí, in spite of his apparent assertions to the contrary, knew no Pahlaví, was as good as ignorant of Arabic, and used only authorities written in the Persian of his own day,[3] we can understand his difficulty about his materials. He could make no progress till he had obtained a copy of Abú Mansúr's Sháhnáma, perhaps the identical copy used by Dakíkí. The poet in fact seems to speak of his Pahlaví

[1] C, 1746. [2] Eng. trans., p. 108. [3] NT, xxiii.

authorities as we might speak of the Hebrew Scriptures, meaning the Old Testament, though we may know them only in the English version. His chief authority was doubtless the Sháhnáma of Abú Mansúr, which as we have seen had been translated into modern Persian directly from Pahlaví originals. He also used, as it would seem, translations into modern Persian of Arabic histories themselves translated from Pahlaví originals. Certain passages in the Sháhnáma, where Iblís is substituted for Áhriman as the name of the evil principle, may be attributed with confidence to such secondary authorities. Pahlaví originals[1] and Arabic versions have alike disappeared, and the Sháhnáma of Firdausí, which alone survives of all the many Sháhnámas that once existed, has now become the principal storehouse of Iránian legend, and the leading authority on the subject. The Sháhnáma of Firdausí then is a true epic, not a great poet's invention, and the proof is to be found in the nature of his subject-matter and in his own words. He expressly disclaims all originality, telling us that the tale had all been told before, and that all the fruit that had fallen in the garden of knowledge had been already garnered. His share was to mould into song the epos of his native land, scorning no tale, however lowly, and putting the best and purest interpretation on all that he found.[2]

[1] With a few exceptions which will come up for notice in due course.

[2] The Zandavasta as we possess it is a Bible in ruins. Of the twenty-one Nasks or Books of which it is said to have consisted only two are extant in their entirety, and these two are precisely those which the Magi would know best—the law of ceremonial observances, and the hymns and litanies most frequently used in public worship. In addition we have fragments of most of the others, and certain summaries, paraphrases, and comments on them in Pahlaví which enable us to form a fair notion of the general contents of the Zandavasta as a whole. Thus the Dinkard or "Acts of the Faith" contains a summary of nineteen of the twenty-one Nasks, while the Bundahish or "Original Creation" preserves for us the account of the creation as it was told in the lost Dámdád Nask or "Creatures produced."

The cosmogony of the poem assumes the earth to be flat and to be supported on the horns of a bull which stood on the back of a fish which swam in the great ocean.[1] The earth was environed by the gigantic Alburz Mountains which reached to heaven.[2] The range was pierced by 180 apertures in the East, and 180 in the West. Through these the sun made its daily entrance and exit, travelling round the outside during the night from the West back to the East.[3] The apertures were intended to account for the changes of place in the rising and the setting of the sun throughout the year. The earth was divided into Seven Climes, the central being Írán, which was surrounded by the other six and was as large as all the rest put together. It was divided from them by vast mountain ranges.[4] The Central Clime was also surrounded by the Eastern equivalent of the Homeric Oceanus or Ocean-stream, for the Indus, Oxus, Aras, Euxine, Bosphorus, Sea of Marmora, Dardanelles, Nile, and Indian Ocean were regarded as a chain of rivers, lakes, gulfs, and seas all in connection with each other.[5] This confusion, especially as regards the Oxus and the Aras, frequently seems to have misled the poet himself. He was a native of Eastern Írán, and naturally supposed that the river so constantly referred to in the poem as the boundary between Írán and Túrán was the Oxus. He shaped matters accordingly, but it can hardly be doubted that the river of his authorities was the Aras.[6] The substitution of Aras for Oxus throws a flood of light upon the wars, campaigns, and political relations recorded in the Sháhnáma, especially during the first and longest portion of the Mythic Period.

[1] *Cf.* Lane, "Arabian Nights," i. 19, note 2, and Nicholas, "Le Quatrains de Kheyam," 168, and note.

[2] WPT, i. 35. [3] *Id.* 22. [4] *Id.* 32–33

[5] WPT, i. 77, and notes. [6] DZA, i. 4; WPT, i. 80.

The position of the Medes on the Aras explains how the incursions into Ázarbíján of the Assyrians in early, and of the Arabs in later, times came to be embodied in the story, how we come to have the wars with the Túránians brought so prominently before us, why the arch-enemy Afrásiyáb is recorded to have been taken prisoner in lake Urumiah, and why the writer of the Armenian history who passes under the name of Moses of Chorene couples the two great enemies of the Medes in his account of Persian fable:—"Quid autem tibi sunt voluptati viles ac vanae de Byraspe Astyage fabulae?"[1] Byrasp or Bíwarasp is the Pahlaví term for Zahhák. Astyages was the great Túránian king of Ekbatana and sometime overlord of Cyrus. The vast spaces and regions of the Oxus have always been a difficulty to the student of the Sháhnáma, but substitute the comparatively narrow area between the Caspian and the Euxine and much is explained.[2]

Thus far Firdausí follows the old Íránian cosmogony. In the case of the heavens he rejects it; and its four heavens of the Stars, of the Moon, of the Sun, and of the Endless Lights, become nine in the poem—those of the seven planets, of the angels, and of the throne of God. These heavens were supposed to be crystalline spheres with independent motions and fitting one inside another like Chinese boxes. The seven planets are the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn.

Firdausí took his imagery chiefly from the ancient cosmogony, or from the natural features of his native land. A Sháh's dominion extends from the Moon to the Fish, or all the Seven Climes obey him. Armies stretch from mountain to mountain, or from sea to sea. The warriors' heads touch the Sun or Saturn. The

[1] *Mosis Chorenensis*, ed. Whiston, 77.
[2] DZA, i. Introd. l.

warriors themselves are, or are like, mountains, lions, elephants, leopards, and crocodiles, they level the hills with their battle-cries, and pierce with their spears the hearts of flints. Their palaces and castles bar the eagle's flight, rise above the clouds or hold converse with the stars. Troops throng like locusts and ants, and even gnats can find no room to pass them. In battle the field or even the whole world is a sea or stream of gore. A tiger bestrides an elephant and brandishes a crocodile, which being interpreted means that a cavalier waves his sword. Swords too are, or are like, diamonds; while spears turn the earth to a reed-bed. One horse is so keen of sight that it can see an ant's foot on black cloth at night two leagues away. Rapid motion is compared to fire or to its spirit Ázargashasp, who is often an equivalent for the lightning, to wind, smoke, or dust, the last being the commonest figure in the poem. The reader, like the poet, will find it ubiquitous, and will not fail to notice in the accounts of marches, battlefields, and single combats, &c., that the sky, sun, moon, &c., are said to grow like indigo or ebony, or to become veiled or to turn dark at noonday, &c. The allusion is to the dust. To say that the air darkened is often merely another way of saying that the dust rose; and both, and kindred expressions, are in constant use to indicate that hosts or individuals have set forth on some expedition, are approaching or engaging in battle, &c. Opposed to the dust—the enemy, is water—the friend. "Where land and water are my treasure is," says one of the Sháhs in the poem, and the poet compares the joy of having one's work approved by the wise to that of seeing plenty of water in one's own canal. Consequently it is not the blue but the cloudy sky that delights the Persian eye, and spring, with its clouds and thunder-showers, flowers, and verdure, is the favourite season. "The hand of Mahmúd," says the

poet, "is like a cloud in spring." Perpetual spring is the Persian's notion of a perfect climate. A king adorns his rose-garden like spring, *i.e.* he summons all his great men about him and holds a court. The Persian year began with the spring, and the beginning of the New Year was a season of rejoicing. The cheek in joy or health is like the rose, tulip, pomegranate, or Judas-tree blossoms, in fear or passion like those of jasmine or fenugreek, or as colourless as sandarach, the transparent gum of the *Callitris Quadrivalvis*, of which pounce is made. In passion, too, or fear, the body shakes like a willow-tree, the heart and liver become full of blood, the veins throb and the blood itself boils. The narcissus bedews the rose when beauty weeps. Stature is like the cypress, which is also the tree of the burial-ground, the tree of posthumous fame, or like the teak. In old age the straight-stemmed cypress stoops. A youth of promise is a sapling bearing its first fruits. To take any important step is to plant a tree it may be of revenge or of some prudent act of policy, and the fruit of the tree will according to circumstances turn out to be either gems or colocynth. The poet is fond of moralising on life, its transient nature and vicissitudes. His favourite figure for the former is the wayside caravanserai or inn where as pilgrims or travellers we sojourn for a brief space, and then departing yield our room to others; for the latter he appeals to the configuration of his native land—the apparently endless alternation of ascent and descent with which all who have sojourned in those parts are well acquainted—or by a bolder flight describes how a man is raised to Saturn or the Pleiades only to be flung into the ditch or to the Fish—the mythological one referred to above.

Like other poets Firdausí suffered from the constraint of rhyme. When for instance we find "Balkh"

at the end of one hemistich of a couplet, "talkh" is pretty certain to be at the end of the other, and as "talkh" means "bitter" the sense of such passages is apt to be strained. Similarly the changes are rung with great frequency on the words "nîl" (indigo or the Nile), "mîl" (a mile), and "pîl" (an elephant) as verse-endings. The first of these three words is one of the translator's "thorns in the flesh," the poet using it in so many different connections that it is impossible to find a formula of explanation that will cover them all. Relief from an English point of view is sometimes obtained by substituting, with Mohl, "blue sea" for "River Nile," but the best antidote, as Firdausí would say, for the bane of the word is Butler's couplet :—

> "For rhyme the rudder is of verses,
> With which, like ships, they steer their courses."

In other words, the poet uses "nîl" for the sound more often than for the sense, and translator and reader alike must take the consequence; but they are at all events exonerated from seeking in such passages for some recondite meaning which Firdausí himself never intended to convey.

CHAPTER III

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Up to the beginning of last century the Shâhnâma existed in MS. only. Since then five more or less complete editions have appeared in print:—

i. In 1808 Dr Lumsden undertook to superintend an edition of the poem, one volume of which was published at Calcutta in 1811, but the publication went no further. This edition will be referred to as L.

ii. In 1829 Turner Macan, who must always hold the place of honour among the editors of the poem, after devoted labour in collation of MSS., published at Calcutta in four volumes the first and only complete edition, the earlier portion of the text being based on that of L. This edition will be referred to as C.

iii. In 1838 Jules Mohl published the first volume of his most sumptuous edition at the expense of the French government. Six volumes have appeared; but the work was never finished owing to the death of the editor. This edition is based on an independent collation of MSS., and includes a French prose translation as well as the Persian text.[1] This edition will be referred to as P.

iv. In 1850 a complete lithographed edition in one volume folio, edited by Muhammad Mahdí, a native of

[1] It should be added that the French translation has been completed by M. Barbier de Meynard from the text of C, and the whole translation has been published separately by the late Madame Mohl.

Ispahán, was published at Tihrán. The text is a reprint of that of C, with occasional variations, some of which are of value. This edition will be referred to as T.

v. In 1877 J. A. Vullers published the first volume of his edition, and two other volumes have since appeared. The publication of the third volume was interrupted by the lamented death of the editor, but has since been completed from the materials left by him by Samuel Lindauer. Even thus the edition contains only about the first half of the entire poem. This edition is based on the collation of the texts of C and P, with occasional readings from L and T, and other sources. This edition will be referred to as V.

The only complete European translations of the Sháhnáma hitherto published are the French one above mentioned and an Italian one in verse by Signor Pizzi. Translations and summaries of portions of the poem have appeared in English and German. The indulgence both of the Persian scholar and of the English reader is asked on behalf of this the first English translation of the poem as a whole in view of the magnitude and difficulty of the undertaking. Our prime object has been to produce a clear and intelligible rendering, and with this end in view we have found it needful to dispense with certain redundances in the original. All these probably may be grouped under the following heads—variant, corrupt, and spurious passages; repetitions, tautologies, and platitudes; and idiomatic and grammatical constructions that proved intractable. Those who are acquainted with the original will readily understand what these omissions amount to; those unacquainted with it may easily find out by comparing our version with that of M. Mohl. Both will, we think, admit that we have left the fable absolutely intact, that

we have scrupulously avoided cutting to the quick and have done nothing to forfeit our claim to call this the first complete English translation of the Sháhnáma.

Our version is metrical, partly rhymed and partly unrhymed. The rhymed portion consists of preludes, apologues, sayings of wise men, songs, terminal couplets, passages in which the poet speaks in his own person, and some others that seemed to lend themselves to such treatment. These form a very small part of the whole, and are generally line for line with the original, though couplets or hemistichs may be sometimes inverted for convenience in rendering. We have changed the metre occasionally partly for the sake of variety, partly to suit the character of different passages, and partly for our own refreshment and amusement. The reader should, however, clearly understand that a change of metres implies no corresponding change in the original, of which the metre is the same throughout.

The unrhymed portion, which forms the bulk of the translation, and does not aspire to the dignity of being called blank verse, is more condensed than the rhymed, though the proportion of English to Persian is constantly varying; sometimes a whole couplet in the original is best expressed by a single line in the translation; sometimes a line and a half, two lines or more in the translation go to the couplet in the original. The average may be roughly stated as three English lines to two Persian couplets. The result of these various economies is that our translation is some twenty-five per cent. shorter than otherwise it would have been.

We have followed the text of V as far as it goes, silently incorporating with it all the changes and additions made by the editor himself in his notes and in his Apparatus Criticus at the end of his first

volume, subject of course to the heads of omissions stated above and to the occasional adoption of readings from other texts. These, we hope, we have invariably noted.

When the text of V failed us we fell back upon that of C, as to which we reserve any remarks that we may find it necessary to make till the volume of our translation is reached in which the change of text occurs.

The attention of the reader is called to the following points:—

1. It is hoped that the Introduction may prove sufficient for those who wish to read the Sháhnáma in its English dress but have no previous acquaintance with the subject. They will find notes prefixed to the principal divisions of the poem, but it has been thought desirable to avoid footnotes, as far as possible, to the translation itself.

2. The passages that need the most constant elucidation are those of a descriptive, figurative, or metaphorical character. An attempt has been made to explain the principal of these once for all in the previous chapter. Such passages often might have been made self-explanatory by a sufficient sacrifice of the imagery of the original. It has seemed to us, however, better to say that the Sháh dropped the ball into the cup[1] or bestowed the kettledrums upon some one, than that the Sháh gave the signal for the host to move or appointed some one commander-in-chief.

3. The structure of the Persian language is very loose grammatically. One form, for instance, stands for he, she, and it. For the sake of clearness we have often substituted the noun for the pronoun. Of

[1] The cup was attached to the side of the elephant on which the Sháh or commander-in-chief rode. Both cup and ball were made of what we should call bell-metal.

course this involves a certain amount of interpretation, and differences of opinion in some cases legitimately may exist as to who or what the person or thing referred to may be. On the other hand, we often find a noun where in English we should use a pronoun, and we have constantly made the substitution in passages where no doubt can arise in the reader's mind. Again the couplet-form in which the poem is written has a tendency to break it up into a succession of short sentences, and this, added to the above-mentioned use of the noun where we should naturally use the pronoun and to the paucity of connecting particles, frequently makes the transition from sentence to sentence somewhat abrupt and the line of thought difficult to follow. Often we have carried on sentences by the addition of connecting particles which are not in the original.

4. We desire to make some explanations with regard to certain important words in the original.

Bâj and *Zamzam*. By these terms is known a certain practice of Zoroastrians which may be paraphrased in English as "taking prayer inwardly." Before eating, washing, &c., it is customary to mutter the beginning of some sacred formula, to carry through the operation in complete silence, and then to utter the rest of the formula aloud.[1] We have employed such expressions as "muttering" or "muttered prayer" to describe the practice. It is sometimes used as a pretext for obtaining a few moments' private conversation.

Barsam. This was formerly a bundle of twigs, but now of metal wires varying in number according to circumstances, held in the hand during the performance of certain religious rites of the Zoroastrians.[2] The practice is clearly referred to in Ezekiel viii. 16, 17. We translate "Barsam" by "the sacred twigs."

[1] WPT, ii. 134. [2] HEP, 397, &c.

Dakhma. Firdausí does not use this word in its proper sense—that in which it is still used by the Parsís at the present day—but in that of mausoleum, charnel, or charnel-house, and we have so translated it.[1]

Dihkán. The general sense of this word is that of countryman as distinguished from townsman. Owing, however, to the fact that the rural class in Írán as elsewhere were the chief repositories of the traditions and folklore of their native land, which were handed down orally and recited at local gatherings by those best qualified for the task, the word came to have the secondary meaning of bard or minstrel, and we have rendered it according to its first or secondary meaning as the sense of the passage required.

Dínár and *Diram.* Of these the dínár was a gold and the diram a silver coin. The Attic drachma was made the basis of his monetary system by Alexander the Great, and Persia possessed no native gold coinage till more than five centuries later. It then obtained one by accident. By the terms of peace between Ardawán (Artabanus), the last Parthian monarch, and the Emperor Macrinus, after the great battle of Nisibis in A.D. 217, the latter agreed to pay to the former an indemnity of more than a million and a half of our money. The sum seems to have been chiefly paid in aurei. Consequently when Ardshír Pápakán (Artaxerxes) became the first Sháh of the new native Persian (Sásánian) dynasty in A.D. 226 he found the country flooded with two distinct coinages with no recognised relation between them except the rough and ready one of commerce. He seems to have left matters to settle themselves, and in his own coinage followed the type of the aureus for his gold coins and that of the drachma for his silver.[2] The

[1] A full account of the Dakhma in the proper sense of the word will be found in DFKHP, i. 192–213.

[2] RSM, 69.

expression "dínárs and dirams" is one frequently met with in the poem, and as it is rather an inconvenient one metrically we have substituted the older form "drachm" for "diram."

Dív. We retain this word as in the original. When spelt with a capital it is to be regarded as equivalent to Áhriman or Iblís, except in the collocations "Black Dív" and "White Dív." When spelt with a small letter it may mean either a demon or a member of some savage or outlandish tribe.[1]

Farr. The "farr" was regarded as the special divine endowment of the Íránian race—the favoured people of Urmuzd—and as an object of envy or ambition to the neighbouring peoples. It was regarded in the Zandavasta as something material, that could be sought, seized, and carried off, and even in the Sháhnáma we find a few occasions when it assumes a visible form. Each of the three primitive castes into which the Íránians were divided had its own special "farr," while the Sháh united all three in his own person, and the possession of the threefold "farr" constituted his title to the throne. There is an instance in the present volume where after the death of a Sháh his two sons are both passed over in the succession as not being possessed of the "farr." Firdausí, it should be noted, gives himself great latitude in the use of this and many other expressions, but wherever the word appears to be used in its correct sense we render it by "Grace" or "Glory."

Farsang. The farsang is a measure of length, and we have always translated it as "league," although it is about three-quarters of a mile longer than our English league.

Khil'at. The word properly means a robe bestowed by a ruler from his own wardrobe on some one as a sign of special favour. As it was accompanied by

[1] Cf. the Chinese expression "foreign devils."

other gifts it came to mean gifts generally when bestowed by the ruler on a subject. We usually translate the word as "robe of honour."

Maidán. This word properly means a level piece of ground attached to palaces or cities and used for purposes of exercise or pastime. Hence it comes to mean any level stretch of country, the space between two hostile hosts on which opposing champions would ride out and contend, a battlefield, park, &c. We have adopted various translations of the word to express these various meanings.

Múbid. The word properly means a chief priest of the Magi, but is often merely equivalent to "sage," and is sometimes used of priests of other religious denominations. When used in its proper sense we translate it by "archmage" or "archimage," when used generally by "priest." The expression "múbid-i múbi-dán," *i.e.* chief of the múbids, we always translate by "high priest."

Pahlaví and *Pahlaván.* The first of these two words has been already explained.[1] We render it by such phrases as "olden tongue," &c. The second is applied by Firdausí to all his chief Íránian characters other than the Sháhs, for the Pahlaván was essentially a subject. The chief Pahlaván was the protagonist or champion of the race for the time being but not necessarily commander-in-chief. Sometimes he was kept in reserve as a last resort when matters were going very badly. The office was hereditary in the heroic family of Garshásp, and Rustam, with whom its mythic glory becomes extinct, was its chief exponent. We translate by "paladin."

Parí. It is hard to realise that this word, which in Arab lips would become "Fari," is not connected with "fairy," but it appears that for the etymology of the latter we must go to the Latin "Fata." In meaning,

[1] p. 64.

however, our "fairy" and "fay" are the nearest English equivalents, and we have so rendered the word.

Saráparda.—We translate this word by "camp enclosure." The saráparda was a screen of canvas or other material encircling an encampment.

5. Some of the chief characters in the poem are known in the original by several titles. Zál, the father of Rustam, is also called Zál-i-Zar, Dastán-i-Zand, Dastán-i-Sám, or simply Dastán; Rustam himself is frequently referred to as the son of Zál, the Elephant-bodied, the Matchless, &c., and there are other instances of duplicate names. To follow the original in this respect would involve the English reader in hopeless confusion, and we have therefore in such cases selected one name for a character and kept to it, or if we employ a duplicate we only do it in such a context that no doubt is possible as to the identity of the person referred to.

Again, the poet uses the word Sháh in a very wide connection, but we employ it only when one of the forty-nine rulers of Írán or the Sultán Mahmúd is referred to. Where the word is applied to others than the above we translate it by king or monarch, &c. We have carried out the same principle in other cases where it seemed to us that obscurity might arise. The above are merely given as instances.

6. With regard to the spelling of proper names we have followed the original with a few exceptions. We have kept Cæsar instead of Ḳaisar, Rúman instead of Rúmí, Indian instead of Hindí, and there may be a few more instances.[1]

For Khákán we invariably substitute the shorter form Khán, as the expression "the Khákán of Chín" is inconvenient metrically.

[1] In the transliteration of proper names the best rule seems to be to retain the thoroughly familiar in their familiar forms. For the English reader "Cæsar said" is better than "Kaisar said," or, more correctly, "Qaiṣar said."

In the Persian the letter k in the word Kábul for instance is a different letter from that beginning the name of the hero Káran, which in accord to present usage should be spelt Qáran. Similarly the z in the word Zábul is a different letter from that in Ázargashasp, but we thought that on the whole it was better not to make such distinctions.

7. In cases in which it seemed to us that ambiguity might arise we have spelt words used metaphorically with a capital letter.

8. Those who desire to compare our translation with the original will find on the pages of the former references to the corresponding pages of the latter. For instance, V. 233 against a line indicates the beginning of that page in Vullers' edition of the text.

9. A note on pronunciation will be found immediately preceding the translation in each volume.

10. The headings of the reigns, parts, and sections are reprinted at the end of the volume to serve as a Table of Contents.

11. A list of some previous translations, the old Persian calendar, some genealogical tables, and a note on abbreviations are appended.

12. Finally we have to ask our readers not to judge, and in all probability condemn, this work on the strength of its first few pages. The Prelude and the initial reigns are most difficult to make anything of in a translation. This is not wholly our own fault. The poet himself, as readers of the original will bear witness, labours heavily, embarrassed perhaps by the character of his subject-matter. "The poem," says Professor Nöldeke, "does not obtain real life till the reign of Jamshíd."[1] In spite of the heroic tale of Káwa the smith, and the pathetic misadventure of Íraj, and much else that is both curious and interest-

[1] NIN, 37.

ing, we should be inclined to put the beginning of the "real life" later still. At all events the reader will find the poem growing in interest reign by reign till poet and poem appear at their best in the charming tale which fills for us the reign of Minúchihr.

PREVIOUS TRANSLATORS OF THE SHÁHNÁMA

FRENCH.

MOHL, already referred to, p. 76.

ITALIAN.

PIZZI, Firdusi. Il Libro dei Rei. Vols. i.–viii. Torino, 1886–1888. [This is a complete metrical translation with an elaborate Introduction.]

GERMAN.

GÖRRES, Das Heldenbuch von Iran aus den Schah Nameh des Firdusi. Berlin, 1820. [The translation extends from the beginning of the history to the death of Rustam. It has a long and strange Introduction and a quaint map of the scene of the Sháhnáma.]

SCHACK, Heldensagen von Firdausi. Berlin, 1865. [The translation extends from Farídún to the death of Rustam.]

RUCKERT, Firdosi's Königsbuch. Sage i.–xxvi. Berlin, 1890–1895. [This extends as far as Rustam and Suhráb.]

ENGLISH.

JONES, Commentarii poëseos Asiaticae. London, 1774. [In this work some passages from the Sháhnáma are translated for the first time into an European language.]

CHAMPION, The Poems of Ferdosi. Calcutta, 1785. [The translation extends from the beginning of the history to the birth of Rustam.]

ATKINSON, Sooráb. Calcutta, 1814. The Sháh Námeh translated and abridged in prose and verse. London, 1832. [This work gives a summary of the history, with short passages of translation interspersed, up to the death of Sikandar (Alexander the Great).]

WESTON, Episodes of the Schah-nameh of Ferdosee. 1815.

ROBERTSON, Roostum Zeboolah and Sohrab. 1829.

THE CALENDAR

THE old Persian year was solar and began at the vernal equinox. It consisted of 365 days divided into 12 months of 30 days each, the five extra days being added after the completion of the twelfth month to fill up the time till the sun should re-enter Aries, and spring and the new year begin on the 21st of March. Each day of the month had its special genius presiding over it, after whom it was named, thus:—

Day 1. Urmuzd.	Day 16. Mihr.
„ 2. Bahman.	„ 17. Surúsh.
„ 3. Ardibihisht.	„ 18. Rashn.
„ 4. Sharívar.	„ 19. Farvardín.
„ 5. Sapandármad.	„ 20. Bahrám.
„ 6. Khurdád.	„ 21. Rám.
„ 7. Murdád.	„ 22. Bád.
„ 8. Dai pa Ádar.	„ 23. Dai pa Dín.
„ 9. Ádar.	„ 24. Dín.
„ 10. Ábán.	„ 25. Ard.
„ 11. Khurshíd.	„ 26. Áshtád.
„ 12. Máh.	„ 27. Ásmán.
„ 13. Tír.	„ 28. Zamíyád.
„ 14. Gúsh.	„ 29. Máhraspand.
„ 15. Dai pa Mihr.	„ 30. Anairán.

Of these thirty génii twelve were chosen to give their names to the months as well, thus:—

SPRING	Farvardín . . .	March 21	to April 19.
	Ardibihisht . . .	April 20	„ May 19.
	Khurdád	May 20	„ June 18.
SUMMER	Tír	June 19	„ July 18.
	Murdád	July 19	„ August 17.
	Sharívar	August 18	„ September 16.

AUTUMN	Mihr	September 17	to October 16.
	Ábán	October 17	„ November 15.
	Ádar	November 16	„ December 15.
WINTER	Dín	December 16	„ January 14.
	Bahman	January 15	„ February 13.
	Sapandármad	February 14	„ March 15.

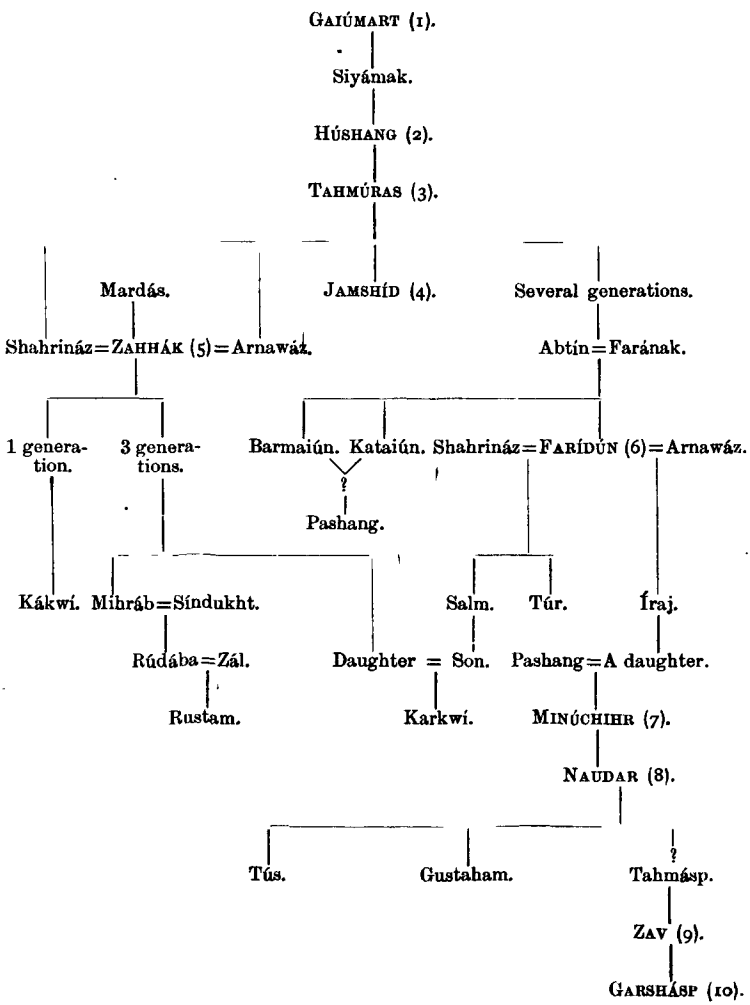
Thus the day Sapandármaḍ of the month Khurdád would be equivalent to May 24th, and the day Khurdád of the month Sapandármad to February 19th.

Time was reckoned by days and nights, not by nights and days as among the Jews and Muhammadans.

The twenty-four hours of the day and night were divided into eight watches of three hours each.

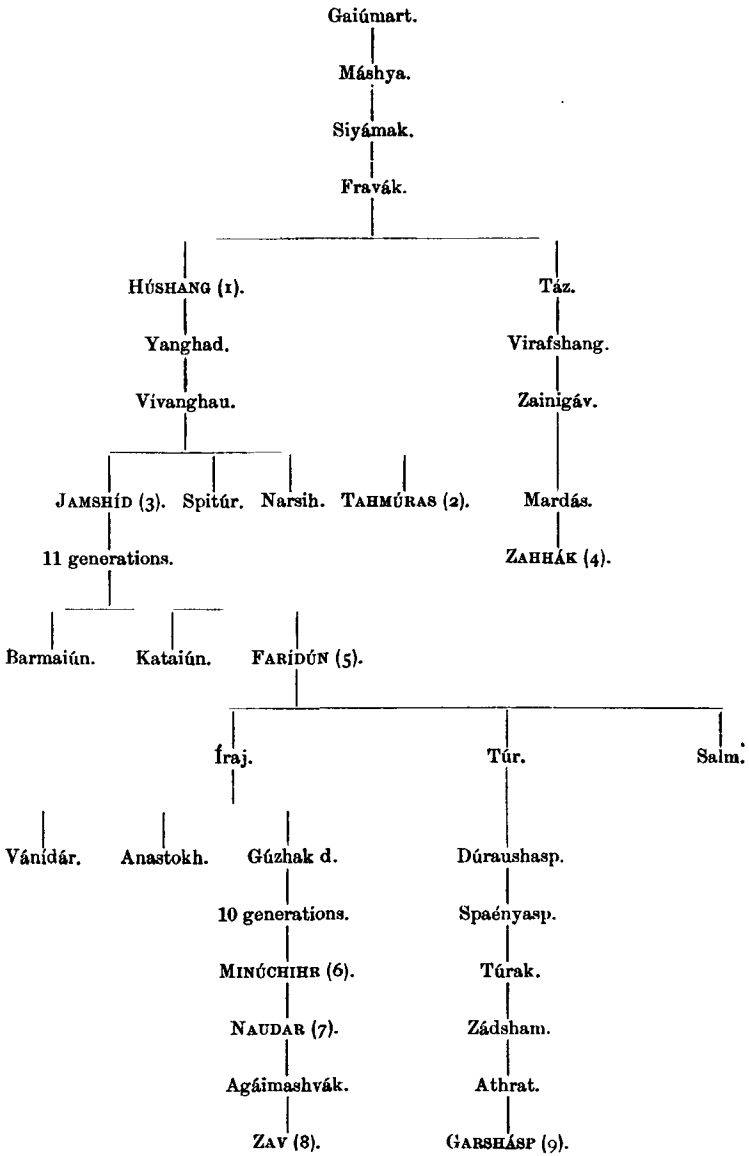
GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE PISHDÁDIANS

(ACCORDING TO THE SHÁHNÁMA.)



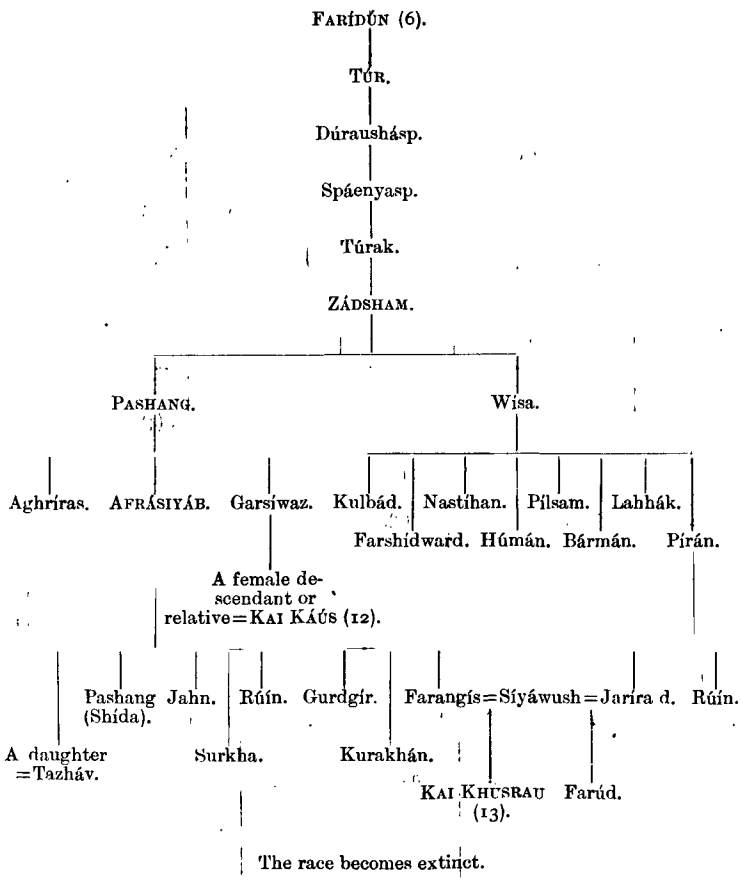
GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE PISHDÁDIANS.

(ACCORDING TO THE BUNDAHISH.)



THE KINGS AND HEROES OF TÚRÁN

(SHÁHNÁMA AND BUNDAHISH COMBINED.)



ABBREVIATIONS

C.—Macan's edition of the Sháhnáma.
L.—Lumsden's do.
P.—Mohl's do.
T.—Tihrân do.
V.—Vullers' do.

BAN. A plain and literal translation of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, now entitled the Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night, &c. By Richard F. Burton.

BCM. The Chahár Maqála ("Four Discourses") of Nidhámí-i-'Arúdí-i-Samarqandí. Translated into English by Edward G. Browne, M.A., M.B.

DEI. J. Darmesteter, Études Iraniennes.

DFKHP. History of the Parsis. By Dosabhai Framji Karaka, C.S.I.

DHA. The History of Antiquity. From the German of Professor Max Duncker. By the late Evelyn Abbott, M.A.

DZA. Professor Darmesteter's Trans. of the Zandavasta in the Sacred Books of the East. Reference to Parts[1] and pages.

EP. Eastern Persia, an Account of the Journeys of the Persian Boundary Commission, 1870–71–72.

EHI. The History of India as told by its own Historians. By Sir H. M. Elliot, K.C.B.

GDF. The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. By Edward Gibbon, Esq. With Notes by Dean Milman and M. Guizot. Edited, with additional Notes, by William Smith, LL.D.

GHP. Histoire des Perses par le Comte de Gobineau.

[1] The second edition of Part I. is referred to unless otherwise specified.

HEP. Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsís. By Martin Haug, Ph.D. Edited and enlarged by E. W. West, Ph.D.

HHR. Historical Researches. By A. H. L. Heeren. English Translation.

HIE. The Indian Empire. By W. W. Hunter, C.S.I., C.I.E., LL.D.

KA. Asia. By A. H. Keane, F.R.G.S.

KUR. Kitab-i-Yamini of Al Utbi. Translated by the Rev. James Reynolds, B.A.

MHP. History of Persia. By Sir John Malcolm, G.C.B.

MLM. The Life of Muhammad. By William Muir, Esq.

MZA. Rev. L. H. Mills' Trans. of the Zandavasta in the Sacred Books of the East. Reference to Part and pages.

NIN. Das Iranische Nationalepos von Theodor Nöldeke.

NSEH. Sketches from Eastern History. By Theodor Nöldeke. English Translation.

NT. Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden. Aus der Arabischen Chronik des Tabari Ubersetzt und mit Ausführlichen Erläuterungen und Ergänzungen Versehn von Th. Nöldeke.

OHS. The History of the Saracens. By Simon Ockley. Fourth Edition.

RFGM. The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World. By George Rawlinson, M.A.

RK. The Koran translated from the Arabic. By J. M. Rodwell. Second Edition.

RP. Records of the Past. First Series.

RPNS. Do. Second Series.

RSM. The Seventh Great Oriental Monarchy. By George Rawlinson, M.A.

SHC. The "Higher Criticism" and the Verdict of the Monuments. By the Rev. A. H. Sayce.

WPT. Dr. E. W. West's Trans. of the Pahlaví Texts in the Sacred Books of the East. Reference to Parts and pages.

NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

á as in "water." [1]
í as in "pique."
ú as in "rude."
a as in "servant."
i as in "sin."
u as *oo* in "foot."
ai as *i* in "time."
au as *ou* in "cloud."
g is always hard as in "give."
kh as *ch* in the German "buch."
zh as *z* in "azure."

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[1] Therefore "Sám," the name of the father of Zál, should be pronounced "Saum."

THE SHÁHNÁMA

THE PRELUDE

ARGUMENT

The poet, after invoking the name of God and praising Him and His wisdom, discourses of the world, of man, of the sun and moon, of the Prophet and his companions, of the compilation of the Sháhnáma, of the poet Dakíkí, and of his own labours in connection with the poem, concluding with the praises of his patrons.

NOTE

§ 5. We read in the Zandavasta: "It (the sky) looks like a palace, that stands built of a heavenly substance, firmly established, with ends that lie afar, shining with its body of ruby over the three-thirds (of the earth)."[1]

§ 7. For 'Alí see p. 12. Muhammadans are divided into many sects. Muhammad is referred to as the lord of the sacred law, *i.e.* the Kuŕán, of stream, milk, &c. We read there: "A picture of the Paradise which is promised to the God-fearing! Therein are rivers of water which corrupt not; and rivers of milk whose taste changeth not; and rivers of wine delicious to those that quaff it; and rivers of honey clarified: and therein are all kinds of fruit for them, and forgiveness from their lord."[2]

§ 10. The name of Firdausí's friend who procured for him the Sháhnáma of Abú Mansúr (see pp. 67–69) is said to have been Muhammad Lashkarí.[3]

§ 11. Abú Mansúr, son of Muhammad, may have been the son of the Muhammad, son of Abdú'r-Razzák, who had the prose Sháhnáma compiled (see p. 68), if the heading can be trusted.

§ 12. Abú'l Kásim, *i.e.* Firdausí himself. The conquest of Kannúj took place after the completion of the Sháhnáma and in days

[1] DZA, ii. 180. [2] RK, 419. [3] C, Persian Preface, 23.

when Firdausí was in exile. The mention of Kannúj appears to be a flattering anticipation of events on the poet's part.[1]

The "trusty minister" was no doubt Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl.

"The gardens of Iram" were said to have been built by Shaddad, son of Ad, that he might anticipate on earth the joys promised him in Paradise by the prophet Húd. After toil extending over centuries the work was completed, but as Shaddad was on the point of entering into possession, he and all his host were slain by a voice from heaven.[2]

Nasiru'd-Dín, *i.e.* Subuktigín (see p. 20).

Nasr, Mahmúd's youngest brother, acted as commander-in-chief, and governed the province of Níshápúr. After some years of successful administration he was recalled to court and served his brother in various capacities. He was a patron of learning and died young.[3]

"The prince of Tús" appears to have been Arslán Jázib, one of Sultán Mahmúd's most famous generals.

§ 1

In the Name of God the Merciful, the Pitiful

In the name of the Lord of both wisdom and mind,
To nothing sublimer can thought be applied,
The Lord of whatever is named or assigned
A place, the Sustainer of all and the Guide,
The Lord of Saturn and the turning sky,
Who causeth Venus, Sun, and Moon to shine,
Who is above conception, name, or sign,
The Artist of the heaven's jewelry!
Him thou canst see not though thy sight thou strain,
For thought itself will struggle to attain
To One above all name and place in vain,
Since mind and wisdom fail to penetrate
Beyond our elements, but operate
On matters that the senses render plain.

[1] Kannúj seems to have been taken in A.D. 1019. EHI, ii. 457.
[2] BAN, iv. 113. [3] KUR, 484.

None then can praise God as He is. Observe
Thy duty: 'tis to gird thyself to serve.
He weigheth mind and wisdom; should He be
  Encompassed by a thought that He hath weighed?
Can He be praised by such machinery
  As this, with mind or soul or reason's aid?
Confess His being but affirm no more,
Adore Him and all other ways ignore, V
Observing His commands. Thy source of might
  Is knowledge; thus old hearts grow young again,
But things above the Veil surpass in height
  All words: God's essence is beyond our ken.

§ 2

Discourse in Praise of Wisdom

Speak, sage! the praise of wisdom and rejoice
The hearts of those that hearken to thy voice,
As God's best gift to thee extol the worth
  Of wisdom, which will comfort thee and guide,
And lead thee by the hand in heaven and earth.
  Both joy and grief, and gain and loss, betide
Therefrom, and when it is eclipsed the sane
  Know not of happiness one moment more.
  Thus saith the wise and virtuous man of lore
Lest sages search his words for fruit in vain:—
"What man soever spurneth wisdom's rede
Will by so doing make his own heart bleed;
The prudent speak of him as one possessed,
And 'he is not of us' his kin protest."
In both worlds wisdom recommendeth thee
  When gyves are on the ankles of the mad;
It is the mind's eye; if thou dost not see
  Therewith thy journey through this world is sad.

It was the first created thing, and still
Presideth o'er the mind and faculty
Of praise—praise offered by tongue, ear, and eye,
All causes it may be of good or ill.
To praise both mind and wisdom who would dare?
And if I venture, who would hear me through?
Since then, O man of wisdom! thou canst do
No good by words hereon, proceed, declare
Creation's process. God created thee
To know appearance and reality.
Let wisdom be thy minister to fend
Thy mind from all that self-respect should shun,
Learn by the words of sages how to wend
Thy way, roam earth, converse with every one;
And when thou hearest any man of lore
Discourse, sleep not, increase thy wisdom's store;
But mark, while gazing at the boughs of speech,
How much the roots thereof are out of reach.

§ 3

Of the Making of the World

The first thing needful for thee is to know
The sum of primal elements which He,
Who maketh all things, made from naught to show
The greatness of His own supremacy.
Those elements are fourfold; at their birth
No time elapsed and labour had no share;
Fire shone above, and in the midst were air
And water; underneath was dusky earth.
Fire was the first its virtue to unfold;
About it moisture ceased and dryness came;

Then fire where'er it failed made way for cold,
And moisture followed cold.
Even so the frame
Of this our Wayside Hostelry was made.
When these four primal elements combined,
They wrought, each on the rest, till every kind
Of products as we see them was displayed.
The turning vault of heaven showed its face,
Exhibiting new wonders day by day,
The Seven Planets then began their sway
In yon Twelve Houses; each one took its place,
Foreboding good and ill, and giving fit
Return to every one that hath the wit
To read. The heavens, fettered sphere to sphere,
Moved as their making to completion came,
And then this earth, with mountain, desert, mere,
And upland, shone as 'twere a lamp aflame.
The mountains reared themselves, the streams gushed out,
While from the soil the herbs began to sprout.
Our earth was not vouchsafed a lofty stead;
Obscurity and gloom prevailed around,
But stars displayed their wonders overhead
And light grew more abundant on the ground;
Then fire arose and water sank, the sun
About the world its course began to run.
The herbage and the various kinds of trees
Grew up as fortune would. No faculties
Have they but growth. Thus fixed they were the prey
Of all the animals that passed, while they,
The roamers, aim at safety, nourishment,
And rest; with such a life they are content.
With sluggish wits and tongues that never spake,
They browse upon the briar and the brake,

Acknowledging no end as wrong or right
And not required to offer reverence
To Him who, having wisdom, justice, might,
Hath not withheld one single excellence.

§ 4

Of the Nature of Man

A farther step—man cometh into sight;
Locks had been made; he was the key of each
With head erect and cypresslike in height,
Submiss to wisdom and endowed with speech,
Possessed of knowledge, wisdom, reasoning,
He ruleth other creatures as their king.
Observe awhile with wisdom for thy guide:
Doth "man" imply one nature, one alone?
Thou know'st it may be but the feeble side
Of mortal man, wherein no trace is shown
Of aught beyond, and yet two worlds agree—
A mighty partnership—to furnish thee.
By nature first, in order last, art thou;
Hold not thyself then lightly. I have known
Shrewd men speak otherwise, but who shall trow
The secrets that pertain to God alone?
Look to the end, act ever rightfully
And toil, since sloth and knowledge ne'er agree;
But if thou wouldst escape calamity,
In both worlds from the net of bale be freed
And in God's sight a righteous man indeed,
Then to yon swiftly turning dome thy gaze
Direct, that cause of anguish and relief,
A dome not fretted by the lapse of days
And unaffected by our joy or grief;

It stayeth not to rest but turneth still,
Not perishing like us but undecayed:
There both the term and process are displayed,
There are revealed to thee both good and ill.

§ 5

Of the Nature of the Sun

Of ruby is yon azure dome, not made
Of air and water, dust and smoke; 'tis all
With lamp and torch in many a spot arrayed
Like gardens for the New Year's festival.
Within the dome a gladdening Gem behold
Revolving; thence the light of day is spread,
And every morning like a shield of gold
It raiseth from the East its shining head;
The earth is clad in robes of spreading light,
The sun declineth and there cometh night;
Day ne'er o'ertaketh night, nor night the day,
Most regular in all their movements they.
O thou my Sun! hast thou for me no ray?

§ 6

Of the Nature of the Moon

Though night be dark there is a light assured:
See that thou use it not unworthily.
Two days and nights its features are obscured,
Worn soothly by revolving; presently
'Tis seen again but pallid, thin, and backed,
Like one who by the pangs of love is racked.

Then if the gazer far away secure
A glimpse thereof, 'tis quickly lost to sight;
But on the following eve it seemeth more
And yieldeth unto thee a larger light.
In fourteen days it waxeth full and bright,
In fourteen waneth till its course is run,
Diminishing as night succeedeth night
And drawing nearer to the blazing sun.
Such was the nature given by God's decree
And will be, while the moon itself shall be.

§ 7

The Praise of the Prophet and his Companions

The Faith and knowledge trusty guides are they,
And 'tis for thee to seek Salvation's way;
If thou wouldst have thy heart not sad, not see
Thy spirit wretched through eternity,
To take the Prophet's teaching be thy part,
There wash away the darkness of thy heart.
What was it that He said, the inspiréd Lord,
Of bidding and forbidding—Heaven's own word?
"I am the City of the Doctrine, he
That is the gateway to it is 'Alí."
I witness that His heart is in that word
As though, as thou mayst say, His voice I heard.
Regard then each companion and 'Alí
As those that gave the Faith stability;
These are the moons, the Prophet is the sun;
With them in union is the way to run.
Slave of the Prophet's slaves with praise I greet
The dust upon his mandatary's feet,
What others say to me is no concern,
This is my way, from this I never turn.

The sage regardeth as a sea this world,
A sea whose waves are driven by the blast;
There seventy gallant ships go sailing past,
Each with her canvas every stitch unfurled.
One stately vessel is in bridal gear,
As beauteous as the eye of chanticleer.
Muhammad and 'Alí are there within
That stately vessel, they and all their kin.
The sage beholding from afar that sea
Of viewless shore and depth, and ware that he
Must face the waves where all must drown, "If I
Shall go down with Muhammad and 'Alí,"
He saith, "I sink in goodly company,
And surely He will rescue me from ill,
Who is of standard, crown, and throne the Lord,
The Lord of wine, of honey, and of rill,
Of founts of milk and floods which spread abroad."
If on the other world thou fix thine eyes
Keep close beside the Prophet and 'Alí,
And, should ill follow, lay the blame on me,
Who take myself the course that I advise.
In this Faith was I born, in this will die;
The dust upon the Lion's foot am I.
Thy heart, if prone to err, is thine own foe,
And can the world more abject miscreants know
Than haters of 'Alí, for born in shame
Are they, and destined to eternal flame?
Take not this world in jest, but walk with those
Whose steps are right; right as thine end propose
If thou wouldst be with men of glorious name.
Why do I talk so long? I fail to see
A limit to my theme's fertility.

§ 8

On the Compilation of the Sháhnáma

All have gone sweeping in the garth of lore
And what I tell hath all been told before,
But though upon a fruit-tree I obtain
No place, and purpose not to climb, still he
That sheltereth beneath a lofty tree
Will from its shadow some protection gain;
A footing on the boughs too I may find
Of yonder shady cypress after all
For having left this history behind
Of famous kings as my memorial.
Deem not these legends lying fantasy,
As if the world were always in one stay,
For most accord with sense, or anyway
Contain a moral.
In the days gone by
There was an Epic Cycle spread broadcast
Among the learned archmages, and at last
A certain paladin, of rustic birth,
A man of courage, wisdom, rank, and worth,
An antiquary, one who ransacked earth
For any legends of the ages past,
Intent on learning what might yet be known,
Called hoar archmages out of every clime,
To ask about the annals of the throne,
The famed successful heroes of old time,
What men were doing in those days that we
Inherit such a world of misery,
And how each day beneath auspicious skies
They carried out some daring enterprise.
The archmages told their legendary store,
How this world fared and what kings undertook,

And as he listened to the men of lore
He laid the basis of the famous book,
Which now remaineth his memorial,
Amid the plaudits both of great and small.

§ 9

Of the poet Dakíkí

Now, when the readers of the book had brought
The stories into vogue, all hearts were caught,
At least among the men of parts and thought.
A brilliant youth well skilled in poetry V. 9
Arose, of ardent mind and eloquent;
"I will retell these tales in verse," said he,
And every one rejoiced at his intent;
But vicious habits were his friends, though we
Should hold all vices foes that we should dread,
And death, approaching unexpectedly,
Imposed its gloomy helmet on his head.
He gave his life to vice, and earth ne'er gave
Him true enjoyment for a single day
While fortune quickly turned its face away:
He perished by the hand of his own slave.
Departing thus he left those tales of yore
Untold; their wakened fortune slept once more.
O God! forgive his faults, and in Thy grace
Assign him at the last an honoured place.

§ 10

How the present Book was begun

Mine ardent heart turned, when Dakíkí fell,
Spontaneously toward the Íránian throne;
"If I can get the book I will retell,"
I said, "the tales in language of mine own."

I asked of persons more than I can say,
For I was fearful as time passed away
That life would not suffice, but that I too
Should leave the work for other hands to do.
There was besides a dearth of patronage
For such a work; there was no purchaser.
It was a time of war, a straitened age
For those who had petitions to prefer.
Much time elapsed. I still concealed from all
My secret purpose, for I could not see
One who was worthy to partake with me
This enterprise. What in this world can be
More excellent than noble words? Men call
Down blessings on them, men both great and small.
Good words had God vouchsafed not to provide,
How had the Prophet ever been our guide?
I had a dear friend in the city, thou
Hadst said: "They twain have but one skin." One day
He said: "I like thy scheme; pursue thy way;
Thy feet are in the right direction now.
I undertake for my part to procure
This ancient Persian book; but be not slack.
Of youth and eloquence thou hast a store,
Thy speech possesseth too the ancient smack.
The stories of our kings afresh relate,
And raise thy reputation with the great."
He brought the volume to me and anon
The darkness of my gloomy soul was gone.

§ 11

In Praise of Abú Mansúr, Son of Muhammad

When I obtained the volume a grandee
Of noble lineage and conspicuous worth,
Still in his youth, a paladin by birth,

Possessing prudence, wit, and energy,
A lord of counsel and of modesty,
To hear whose gentle accents was my joy,
Said unto me: "What means can I employ
To make thee give thy life to poetry?
I will do all and hide thy poverty."
He used to tender me as one would tend
Ripe apples, lest a breath of wind should spoil;
Thus through that noble and kind-hearted friend
I soared to Saturn from our grimy soil.
In his eyes gold and silver were as dust
While rank gained lustre. Earth seemed vile indeed
Before him. He was brave and one to trust,
And when he perished was as in a mead
A lofty cypress levelled by a gust.
I see no trace of him alive or dead;
By murderous Crocodiles his life was sped.
Woe for that girdle and that girdlestead,
That royal mien, that high imperial head!
Bereft of him my heart's hopes ceased to be,
My spirit quivered like a willow-tree;
But I bethink me, to redress this woe,
Of counsel which to that great prince I owe;
He said: "This Tale of Kings, if 'tis thy fate
To tell it, to the great king dedicate."
Those words gave solace to my heart; there came
Thereto a sense of gladness and content;
I took in hand my story in the name
Of him who is o'er kings pre-eminent,
The lord of earth, the lord of crown and throne,
Whose conquering fortune sleep hath never known.

§ 12

The Praise of Sultán Mahmúd

Ne'er, since the making of the world was done,
Hath such a king been seen by human eye;
The crown above his throne is like the sun,
And maketh earth as bright as ivory.
How canst thou say: "It is the sun indeed"?
From him by far more glorious rays proceed.
Abú'l Kásim! this all-victorious one
Hath set his throne yet higher than the sun!
His are the rays which illustrate the sky,
His is the Grace which openeth afar
Yon mines of gold.
Awoke my slumbering star.
Ideas poured through my brain tumultuously.
Methought: "The time for speaking in good sooth
Hath come, the outworn age regaineth youth."
By thoughts of this great monarch occupied
I fell asleep one night with lips all praise,
While my free heart, although my lips were tied,
Shone in the dark. Then I beheld in sleep
A dazzling lustre rising from the deep
And making by the brightness of its rays
The gloom of earth like glittering gems. The waste
Grew like brocade beneath that radiant light,
And in the midst a turquoise throne was placed.
Upon the throne there sat a moon-like king
With on his head a crown for covering.
His army stretched two miles. To left there were
Seven hundred elephants in all their might.
V. 12 Before him stood a trusty minister
To guide him to the Faith and to do right.

By that Sháh's Grace, by all those troops outspread
And mighty elephants my head was dazed,
And as upon his royal face I gazed
To that illustrious company I said:—
"Is this the sky and moon, or throne and crown?
Are these his soldiers or the stars come down?"
One answered: "'Tis the king of Rúm and Ind,
King from Kannúj e'en to the river Sind,
While in Túrán and in Írán men give
As slaves obedience to his will and live
Thereby. With justice decked he earth and now,
That done, hath set the crown upon his brow.
Mahmúd the worldlord, the great Sháh, doth bring
Together sheep and wolf for watering.
The monarchs from Kashmír down to the sea
Of Chín are instant in his eulogy,
And children yet within their cots proclaim
With lips unweaned as their first word his name
Do thou too tell his praise, for thou canst speak,
And through him everlasting glory seek.
All do his bidding and keep fealty."
When I awakened to my feet I sprang,
Oh! what a while that night his praise I sang!
No drachms had I but poured my soul, and cried
To mine own heart: "My dream is justified,
For his renown is patent far and wide."
Then praise to him who praiseth the Most High
For sleepless fortune, crown, and signet-ring.
His glory maketh earth like garths in Spring
With flower-painted soil and cloudy sky—
A sky whence in their season showers come
And make the world a garden of Iram.
What good is in Írán his justice giveth,
His name alone is heard where any liveth.

A bounteous Heaven at banquets thou wilt find,
A sharp-clawed Dragon in the fray meanwhile;
He is an elephant, hath Gabriel's mind,
Hands like a winter-cloud, heart like the Nile.
V. 13 When he is wroth, opposing fortune's might
Is, as dínárs are, worthless in his sight;
To boast of crown and hoard is not his part,
And war and travail darken not his heart.
All those who are among his fosterlings,
Freeborn or otherwise, but noble still,
Devoted lieges of the king of kings,
With loins girt ready to perform his will,
Have each a province under their control,
Each hath his name inscribed on every roll.
The foremost is his brother, who in years
Is younger, but in courage hath no peers;
They who are courtiers of his Grace acquire
Joy in the shadow of the age's king,
For he who hath Násiru'd-Dín for sire
Hath round his throne the Pleiads in a ring,
And is the lord of prowess, rede, and might
In whom the nobles, one and all, delight.
Next is the prince of Tús, a valiant lord
Who mocketh lions in the battle-tide,
And lavisheth what fortune may accord
To him, desiring honour, naught beside.
He leadeth men to God; his prayer is still
That the Sháh's head may be preserved from ill.
May earth ne'er see that royal head go down,
And may the Sháh rejoice for ever thus,
Possessing health of body, throne, and crown,
Unpained, untroubled, and victorious.

Now to the opening of my work once more
To tell the tales of famous kings of yore.

THE BEGINNING OF THE HISTORY

I

THE PISHDÁDIAN DYNASTY

ARGUMENT

The poet tells the history of the first ten Sháhs of Írán, describes the progress of the world from barbarism to culture, and the invention of the arts and sciences, and finally how the Grace departed from the Pishdádian Dynasty through the unworthiness and degeneracy of its representatives.

NOTE

The word Pishdádian, the name given to the Sháhs of the first Iránian Dynasty, means those of the old law or original dispensation. Zoroastrianism was built upon an older foundation of nature-worship, to which it bears some such relation as the New Testament bears to the Old. One of the gods of the elder faith—Ahura, the Asura of India—became the supreme deity, Ahura Mazda, of the new dispensation, and the Urmuzd of the Sháhnáma. Accordingly Gaiúmart, the first Sháh in the poem, is expressly recognised in the Zandavasta, as the first worshipper of Urmuzd.[1] Húshang, the second Sháh, institutes the worship of fire—a characteristic feature of Zoroastrianism. Urmuzd in the Zandavasta makes a covenant with Yima, the fourth Sháh, and tries to persuade him to undertake the part of lawgiver afterwards taken by Zoroaster, but Yima through modesty declines.

Zoroastrianism therefore in a sense existed before Zoroaster, with whose advent the Zandavasta ends; hence there is less anachronism than might be supposed in the allusions, often made in the earlier parts of the poem, to fire-worship, the Zandavasta, and similar matters. Zoroaster was the first recipient of the *complete* revelation.

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[1] DZA, ii. 200.

I

GAIÚMART

HE REIGNED FOR THIRTY YEARS

ARGUMENT

Gaiúmart, the first Sháh and the first ruler of the world, incurs the envy of Áhriman, who sends a host of dívs to attack him, commanded by the Black Dív—the son of Áhriman. Siyámak, the son of Gaiúmart, with an army encounters the Black Dív and is slain, but is avenged by his son Húshang, who succeeds to the throne on the death of his grandfather.

NOTE

The poet in his account of Gaiúmart omits much Zoroastrian lore. In the Bundahish Urmuzd is represented as first creating two beings—the representatives of mankind, and of the animals and plants, respectively. These were Gaiúmart and the Primeval Ox. For three thousand years they lived happily and unmolested in the world of Urmuzd. At the expiration of this period Áhriman assailed the creation of Urmuzd, and slew both the Ox and Gaiúmart; but the latter survived the former by thirty years, which became the duration of the reign of the first Sháh in the poem. The Ox in dying gave origin to the plants and animals, and Gaiúmart to the first human couple—Máshya[1] and Máshyói—who in turn produced offspring among which was Siyámak, who is represented as the son of Gaiúmart in the Sháhnáma. In the poem, too, the attack on Gaiúmart is made indirectly by means of the Black Dív, not directly by Áhriman as in the Bundahish. The reader may be reminded that the Bundahish is a Pahlaví version of the lost book of the Zandavasta known as the Dámdád or "races produced."

[1] *I.e.* man. DZA, i. lviii.

It will be noticed that Gaiúmart is stated to have made his home upon a mountain. Mountains were looked upon as sacred places in old times as being nearer heaven. Urmuzd reveals the Zandavasta to Zoroaster on the mountain of the holy Questions.[1] In the division of mankind into castes in the reign of Jamshíd the mountains are specially set apart for the priests. The mother of Farídún with her infant son takes refuge with a holy hermit who dwells on Mount Alburz, and there too Kai Kubád, the founder of the Kaiánian Dynasty, receives the news of his election to the throne.

§ 1

The Greatness of Gaiúmart and the Envy of Áhriman

What saith the rustic bard? Who first designed
To gain the crown of power among mankind?
V. 14 Who placed the diadem upon his brow?
The record of those days hath perished now
Unless one, having borne in memory
Tales told by sire to son, declare to thee
Who was the first to use the royal style
And stood the head of all the mighty file.
He who compiled the ancient legendary,
And tales of paladins, saith Gaiúmart
Invented crown and throne, and was a Sháh.
This order, Grace, and lustre came to earth
When Sol was dominant in Aries
And shone so brightly that the world grew young.
Its lord was Gaiúmart, who dwelt at first
Upon a mountain; thence his throne and fortune
Rose. He and all his troop wore leopard-skins,
And under him the arts of life began,
For food and dress were in their infancy.

[1] Introd. p. 62.

He reigned o'er all the earth for thirty years,
In goodness like a sun upon the throne,
And as a full moon o'er a lofty cypress
So shone he from the seat of king of kings.
The cattle and the divers beasts of prey
Grew tame before him; men stood not erect
Before his throne but bent, as though in prayer,
Awed by the splendour of his high estate,
And thence received their Faith.
He had a son
Named Siyámak, ambitious like his sire,
A youth well favoured, skilled, and fortunate,
His father's Life, whose joy was gazing on him,
That fruitful offshoot of the ancient stem.
That Life the father cherished tenderly,
And wept for love, consumed by dread of parting.
Thus time passed onward and the kingdom prospered,
For Gaiúmart had not an enemy V. 15
Except, in secret, wicked Áhriman,
Who led by envy sought the upper hand.
He had a son too, like a savage wolf
Grown fearless, and a host of warriors.
The son assembled these and sought his sire,
Resolved to win the great Sháh's throne and crown,
Whose fortune joined with that of Siyámak
Made the world black to him. He told his purpose
To every one and filled the world with clamour;
But who told Gaiúmart about the foe?
The blest Surúsh appeared in fairy-form,
Bedight with leopard-skin, and told the king
The projects that his foes were harbouring.

§ 2

How Siyámak was Slain by the Hand of the Dív

News of that foul dív's acts reached Siyámak,
Who listened eagerly; his heart seethed up
With rage. He gathered troops, arrayed himself
In leopard-skin, for mail was yet unworn,
And went to fight. When host met host he came
In front unarmed to grapple with the son
Of Áhriman. That horrible Black Dív
Clutched at, bent down that prince of lofty stature
And rent him open. Thus died Siyámak
By that foul hand and left the army chiefless.
When Gaiúmart heard this the world turned black
To him, he left his throne, he wailed aloud
And tore his face and body with his nails;
V. 16 His cheeks were smirched with blood, his heart was broken,
And life grew sombre. All the soldiers wept,
Consumed upon the flames of woe, and wailed
As clad in turquoise-coloured garb they stood
Before the portal of the Sháh. All cheeks
Were wine-red, for all eyes shed tears of blood.
Birds, timid beasts and fierce, flocked to the mountain
With doleful cries in anguish, and dust rose
Before the court-gate of the mighty Sháh.
When one year had passed thus the blest Surúsh
Was sent by God; he greeted Gaiúmart
And said: "Lament no more, control thyself,
Do as I bid, collect thy troops and turn
Thy foemen into dust, relieve earth's surface
Of that vile dív and thine own heart of vengeance."

The famous Sháh looked up and cursed his foes,
Then, calling by the highest of all names
Upon his God, he wiped his tears away
And prosecuted vengeance night and day.

§ 3

How Húshang and Gaiúmart went to Fight the Black Dív

The blesséd Siyámak had left a son,
His grandsire's minister, a prince by name
Húshang—a name implying sense and wisdom.
It was the lost restored and fondly cherished,
And therefore being set on war the Sháh
Sent for the prince and frankly told him all:—
"I mean to gather troops and raise the war-cry,
But thou being young shalt lead for I am spent." v. 17
He raised a host of fairies, lions, pards,
And raveners, as wolves and fearless tigers,
But took the rear, his grandson led the host.
The Black Dív though in terror raised the dust
To heaven, but his claws were hanging slack
Frayed by the roaring beasts. Húshang saw this
And putting forth his hands like lion's paws
Made earth too narrow for the lusty dív,
Then flayed him, lopping off his monstrous head,
And trampled him in scorn thus flayed and shent.
The days of Gaiúmart had reached their close
When he achieved this vengeance on his foes;
He passed away, the world was for his heir,
But see who hath had glory to compare
With his! He owned this tricky world and made
The path of gain his path, and yet he stayed
Not to enjoy, for like a story done
Is this world: good and ill abide with none.

II

HÚSHANG

HE REIGNED FORTY YEARS

ARGUMENT

Húshang succeeds his grandfather Gaiúmart as Sháh. He is a great culture-hero, and invents the arts of working in metals, irrigation, agriculture, &c. He introduces the use of domestic animals and discovers fire. He institutes its worship, and founds the feast of Sada.

NOTE

Húshang—the Haoshyangha of the Zandavasta—is, according to the older authorities, the first Sháh of the Pishdádian dynasty, and the grandson, not the son, of Siyámak. Siyámak and his wife Nashák produced a pair named Fravák and Fravákaín, who produced in their turn fifteen pairs. Of these, nine pairs proceeded on the back of the ox Sarsaok through the ocean—the chain of rivers, lakes, seas, and gulfs surrounding the central clime in the old cosmogony—to the other six climes and stayed there, while the other six pairs, of whom Húshang and his wife Gúzhak were one, remained to people the central clime within which Irán is situated.[1]

§ I

The Accession of Húshang and his civilising Arts

Húshang, a just and prudent sovereign,
Assumed his grandsire's crown. For forty years
Heaven turned above him. He was just and wise.

[1] WPT, i. 58.

He said: "I lord it o'er the seven climes,
Victorious everywhere. My word is law,
I practise bounteousness and equity;
So hath God willed."
He civilised the world,
And filled the surface of the earth with justice.
He was the first to deal with minerals
And win the iron from the rock by craft.
He gained more knowledge and, inventing smithing,
Made axes, saws, and mattocks. Next he turned
To irrigation by canals and ducts;
Grace made the labour short. As knowledge grew
Men sowed and reaped and planted. Each produced
The loaf whereof he ate, and kept his station.
Till then men lived on fruit in poor estate
And clad themselves in leaves. Religious rites
Existed, Gaiúmart had worshipped God.
Húshang first showed the fire within the stone,
And thence through all the world its radiance shone.

§ 2

How the Feast of Sada was Founded

One day he reached a mountain with his men
And saw afar a long swift dusky form
With eyes like pools of blood and jaws whose smoke V. 19
Bedimmed the world. Húshang the wary seized
A stone, advanced and hurled it royally.
The world-consuming worm escaped, the stone
Struck on a larger, and they both were shivered.
Sparks issued and the centres flashed. The fire
Came from its stony hiding-place again
When iron knocked. The worldlord offered praise
For such a radiant gift. He made of fire
A cynosure. "This lustre is divine,"
He said, "and thou if wise must worship it."

That night he made a mighty blaze, he stood
Around it with his men and held the feast
Called Sada; that bright festival remaineth
As his memorial, and may earth see
More royal benefactors like to him.
By Grace and kingly power domesticating
Ox, ass, and sheep he turned them to good use.
"Pair them," he said, "use them for toil, enjoy
Their produce, and provide therewith your taxes."
He slew the furry rovers for their skins,
Such as the squirrel, ermine, fox, and sable,
So sleek of hair; the rovers clothed the talkers.
V. 20 He gave, spent freely, and enjoyed the fruit,
Then passing took naught with him but repute.
In life no little share of toil had he
In musings past all count and grammarye,
And when a better life was his elsewhere
He left the throne of greatness to his heir.
The time that fortune gave him did not last
For long, Húshang, the wise and prudent, passed.
To thee too this world will not give its love,
Nor will it from its face the veil remove.

III

TAHMÚRAS

TAHMÚRAS, THE BINDER OF THE DÍV, REIGNED THIRTY YEARS

ARGUMENT

Tahmúras, the son of Húshang, continues his father's work as a culture-hero, in the domestication of animals, the invention of weaving, &c., conquers and enslaves Áhriman, and defeats the dívs, whose lives he spares on condition that they shall teach him the art of writing.

NOTE

According to the Bundahish, Tahmúras—the Takhma Urupa of the Zandavasta—was the great grandson of Húshang, and the brother of Jamshíd, who, however, is represented as his son in the poem. The legend of the binding of Áhriman by Tahmúras is several times mentioned in the Zandavasta, where he is represented as praying that he may conquer all demons and men, all sorcerers and fairies, and ride Áhriman, turned into the shape of a horse, all around the earth for thirty years.[1] From other sources we learn that Áhriman, while kept as a charger by Tahmúras, persuaded the latter's wife to reveal her husband's secrets, and acting on the information thus gained threw off Tahmúras and swallowed him while he was riding down Mount Alburz. Yim (Jamshíd), hearing of his brother's misfortune, succeeded in dragging the corpse from the entrails of the fiend, and thus restored the culture of the world which had perished with Tahmúras.[2]

[1] DZA, ii. 252, 292.

[2] *Id.* 252, note. WPT. iii. 60, and note.

The reader will note the reappearance of the Black Dív in this reign after his apparently complete destruction by Húshang. The explanation of course is that the aim of the poet is to follow his authorities, not to make consistent stories. He is here dealing with another legend, so the Black Dív reappears.[1]

§ 1

Tahmúras ascends the Throne, invents new Arts, subdues the Dívs, and dies

Húshang possessed a wise and noble son
Hight Tahmúras—the Binder of the Dív—
Who took the throne and girt his loins to rule,
Then called the archmages and in gracious words
Said: "Throne and palace, crown and mace and cap
Are mine to-day, and when my rede hath purged
The world a mountain-top shall be my footstool.
I will restrain the Dív, will reign supreme,
And use the useful for the common gold."
He sheared the flocks, and men began to spin;
He thus invented clothes and draperies.
He chose the swiftest quadrupeds and made them
To feed on barley, grass, and hay; he noted
V. 21 The shyest of the beasts of prey, and chose
The jackal and the cheetah, luring them
From hill and plain, and taught them to obey him.
Among the well-armed birds he chose the hawk
And noble falcon, and began to tame them
While men looked on amazed. His orders were
To rear the birds and speak to them with kindness.
He brought the cocks and hens to crow at drumbeat,[2]
And turned all hidden properties to use.
He said: "Address your prayers and praise to Him
Who made the world, and us to rule the beasts:
Praise be to Him, for He directed us."

[1] See Introd. p. 48.

[2] The drum beaten outside palaces in the East at dawn.

He had a famed and honest minister
By name Shídásp, an upright man who took
No step unless toward justice. Through the day
He fasted, through the night he prayed, and lived
In charity with all. The Sháh's good fortune
Was his sole wealth, ill doers he restrained
And taught the Sháh all good, acknowledging
No rank but excellence till Tahmúras,
Purged of his faults and glorious with the Grace,
Bound Áhriman with spells and rode him horsewise
At whiles around the world. Thereat the dívs
Rebelled and held a conclave, for their throne
Of gold was void. When Tahmúras was ware V. 22
He was enraged and spoiled their trafficking,
Girt him with Grace and took his massive mace.
Then all the dívs and warlocks sallied forth—
A huge magician host. The Black Dív led them
And vapoured, while their shouts affronted heaven.
It darkened, earth turned sable and all eyes
Grew dim. The illustrious worldlord Tahmúras
Advanced girt up for battle and revenge.
There were the roar of flame and reek of dívs,
Here were the warriors of the lord of earth,
Who ranked his troops and speedily prevailed,
For of the foe he bound the most by spells
And quelled the others with his massive mace.
The captives bound and stricken begged their lives.
"Destroy us not," they said, "and we will teach thee
A new and fruitful art."
He gave them quarter
To learn their secret. When they were released
They had to serve him, lit his mind with knowledge
And taught him how to write some thirty scripts
Such as the Rúman, Persian, Arabic,
Sughdí, Chíní, and Pahlaví, and thus
Delineate sounds. How many better arts

Explored he in a reign of thirty years,
Yet passed away! His time of life was spent
And all his toils became his monument.
O world! caress not those whom thou wilt soon
Cut off, for such caressing is no boon;
Thou raisest one to very heaven on high,
Then biddest him in sorry dust to lie.

IV

JAMSHÍD

HE REIGNED SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS

ARGUMENT

Jamshíd succeeds his father Tahmúras as Sháh, and becomes the greatest and most famous of the culture-heroes. He continues the work of his predecessors, makes additions of his own, and introduces the luxuries and refinements of life. He divides mankind into four castes or classes. He travels over the world, and is the first to cross the sea in ships. He aspires to the dominion of the air, obtains it, and lives in ever closer communion with God. Áhriman is rendered powerless for ill, disease and death cease, and the world passes through the Golden Age. At length, spoiled by success, Jamshíd comes to think himself God, and orders that divine honours shall be paid to himself alone. The Grace of God abandons him. Áhriman is unchained and incites Zahhák, who has become his instrument, to make war on Jamshíd, and the latter is slain.

NOTE

Jamshíd, as we have already seen, is the brother, not the son, of Tahmúras in the older form of the legends. With the reign of Jamshíd the Vedas, Zandavasta, and Sháhnáma meet on common ground. In the Vedas Manu and Yama are the twin sons o Vivasvat, the bright or shining one, *i.e.* the sun. Manu is the progenitor and lawgiver of the Aryan race and Yama is a god.[1] In the Zandavasta Yima is the son of Vívanghat, is the Iránian Noah, has a covenant with God, and is offered by Him the post afterwards accepted by Zoroaster. In the legend of the building

[1] DHA, iv. 31.

of his Var, or underground palace, in anticipation of the Flood, we have the origin of Firdausí's account of the architectural achievements of Jamshíd: "Then Yima said within himself: 'How shall I manage to make that Vara which Ahura Mazda has commanded me to make?' And Ahura Mazda said unto Yima: 'O fair Yima, son of Vívanghat! Crush the earth with a stamp of thy heel, and then knead it with thy hands, as the potter does when kneading the potter's clay. . . .' And Yima made a Vara, long as a riding-ground, on every side of the square. . . . There he established dwelling-places, consisting of a house with a balcony, a courtyard, and a gallery. In the largest part of the place he made nine streets, six in the middle part, three in the smallest."[1]

He is described as "the bright Yima, the good shepherd . . . he ruled over the seven Karshvares (Climes) of the earth, over the Daévás (demons) and men. . . . He who took from the Daévas both riches and welfare, both fatness and flocks, both weal and Glory. In whose reign both aliments (food and drink) were never failing for feeding creatures, flocks and men were undying, waters and plants were undrying; in whose reign there was neither cold wind nor hot wind, neither old age nor death, nor envy made by the Daévas, in the times before his lie, before he began to have delight in words of falsehood and untruth. But when he began to have delight in words of falsehood and untruth, the Glory was seen to flee away from him in the shape of a bird. When his Glory had disappeared, then the great Yima . . . the good shepherd, trembled and was in sorrow before his foes; he was confounded, and laid him down on the ground."[2] Elsewhere his being sawn asunder is mentioned, the act not being referred directly to Zahhák but to Spityura, "he who sawed Yima in twain."[3]

Spityura was a brother of Yima's. He is not mentioned in the Sháhnáma; but the enmity between brothers, so characteristic of Eastern life, crops up again and again in the poem. Thus the two brothers of Farídún envy and try to murder him, and the incident recurs with more disastrous results in the case of Farídún's own sons.

The division into castes also appears in the Zandavasta, where both the three and the four castes are mentioned, and the first three are there stated to have been instituted by Zoroaster, who placed his three earthly sons at the head of them.[4] In the poem they are the institution of his great predecessor Jamshíd.

Jamshíd is a contraction of Yima and Khshaéta (king).[5]

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[1] DZA, i. 18. [2] *Id.* ii. 293. [3] *Id.* 297.
[4] *Id.* 201, and see MZA, iii. 265. [5] HEP, 277.

For Iblís, see Introduction, p. 70.

Zahhák will be dealt with under his proper head; but it may be pointed out with regard to the strange story of his second fall, owing to the pleasures of the table, that in the Bundahish Máshya and Máshyói—the original human pair—who apparently at first lived entirely on water, are incited to partake of stronger meats owing to their relish for the weaker sorts being taken from them by the demons.[1]

Elsewhere in the same work we read: "On the nature of the resurrection and future existence it says in revelation, that, whereas Máshya and Máshyói . . . first fed upon water, then plants, then milk, *and* then meat, men also when their time of death *has* come, first desist from eating meat, then milk, then from bread, till when they shall die they always feed upon water. So, likewise, in the millennium. . . . They will desist from meat food, *and* eat vegetables *and* milk; afterwards they abstain from milk food *and* abstain from vegetable food, *and* are feeding on water; *and* for ten years before Sóshyans comes they remain without food, *and* do not die."[2]

Sóshyans is the third of the divine sons of Zoroaster, and the Messiah of Zoroastrianism. There is plenty in the above extract to account for such a legend as that of the text.

§ 1

The Greatness and Fall of Jamshíd

Jamshíd, the mighty son of Tahmúras,
Full of his father's maxims, girt himself,
Succeeded to his glorious father's throne,
And wore in kingly wise the crown of gold.
His girdle was the Grace of king of kings,
And all the world obeyed him, contests ceased,
The age had rest, and bird and dív and fairy
Were his to bid, the world took added lustre,
Through him the throne of Sháhs was glorified.
"Mine is the Grace," he said, "I am both king
And archimage, I will restrain ill-doers
And make for souls a path toward the light."

[1] WPT, i. 54, 55. [2] *Id.* 120.

He first wrought arms and oped for warriors
The door of fame. His Grace made iron yield;
He fashioned it to helmets, hauberks, breastplates,
And coats of armour both for man and horse.
His ardent mind achieved the work and made
Good store in fifty years. Another fifty
He spent on raiment fit for fight or feast;
And made of spun and floss silk, hair and cotton,
Fine fabrics, cloth of hair and rich brocade.
He taught to spin and weave, and when the stuffs
Were made he showed men how to full and sew them
Then to the joy of all he founded castes
V. 24 For every craft; it took him fifty years.
Distinguishing one caste as sacerdotal
To be employed in sacred offices,
He separated it from other folk
And made its place of service on the mountains
That God might be adored in quietude.
Arrayed for battle on the other hand
Were those who formed the military caste;
They were the lion-men inured to war—
The Lights of armies and of provinces—
Whose office was to guard the royal throne
And vindicate the nation's name for valour.
The third caste was the agricultural,
All independent tillers of the soil,
The sowers and the reapers—men whom none
Upbraideth when they eat. Though clothed in rags,
The wearers are not slaves, and sounds of chiding
Reach not their ears. They are free men and labour
Upon the soil safe from dispute and contest.
What said the noble man and eloquent?
"'Tis idleness that maketh freemen slaves."
The fourth caste was the artizans. They live
By doing handiwork—a turbulent crew,

Who being always busied with their craft
Are given much to thought. Jamshíd thus spent
Another fifty years and did much good,
For each man learnt his place and others' too.
He bade the foul dívs temper earth with water
And taught them how to fashion moulds for bricks.
They laid foundations first with stones and lime,
Then raised thereon by rules of art such structures
As hot baths, lofty halls, and sanctuaries. V, 25
He searched among the rocks for stones whose lustre
Attracted him and came on many a jewel,
As rubies, amber, silver, gold. Jamshíd
Unlocked their doors and brought them forth by spells.
He introduced the scents that men enjoy
As camphor, genuine musk, gum Benjamin,
Sweet aloe, ambergris, and bright rosewater.
Next leechcraft and the healing of the sick,
The means of health, the course of maladies
Were secrets opened by Jamshíd: the world
Hath seen no other such discoverer.
He crossed the sea in ships. For fifty years
His wisdom brought to light the properties
Of things. These works achieved, Jamshíd ambitioned
Rank loftier still, and by his royal Grace
Made him a throne, with what a wealth of gems
Inlaid! which when he willed the dívs took up
And bare from earth to heaven. There the Sháh,
Whose word was law, sat sunlike in mid air.
The world assembled round his throne in wonder
At his resplendent fortune, while on him
The people scattered jewels, and bestowed
Upon the day the name of New Year's Day,
The first of Farwardín and of the year,
When limbs repose from labour, hearts from strife.

V. 26 The noble chieftains held a festival,
Called for the goblet, wine, and minstrelsy,
And ever since that time that glorious day
Remaineth the memorial of that Sháh.
Thus things continued for three centuries,
And all the while men never looked on death;
They wotted not of travail or of ill,
And dívs like slaves were girt to do them service;
Men hearkened to Jamshíd with both their ears,
Sweet voices filled the world with melody,
And thus till many years had come and gone
The royal Grace shone brightly from the Sháh:
His ends had been attained, the world reposed,
And still new revelations came from God,
Men saw but goodness in their king, the earth
Served him, he reigned—a monarch with the Grace.
One day contemplating the throne of power
He deemed that he was peerless. He knew God,
But acted frowardly and turned aside
In his ingratitude. He summoned all
The chiefs, and what a wealth of words he used!
"The world is mine, I found its properties,
The royal throne hath seen no king like me,
For I have decked the world with excellence
And fashioned earth according to my will.
From me derive your provand, ease, and sleep,
Your raiment and your pleasure. Mine are greatness
V. 27 And diadem and sovereignty. Who saith
That there is any great king save myself?
Leechcraft hath cured the world, disease and death
Are stayed. Though kings are many who but I
Saved men from death? Ye owe me sense and life:
They who adore me not are Áhrimans.
So now that ye perceive what I have done
All hail me as the Maker of the world."

Thereat the archmages hung their heads, perplexed
To answer and God's Grace departed from him,
The world was filled with din, the Court deserted,
None who desired renown stayed in his presence.
For three and twenty years the empty portal
Told of the crime that equalled him with God,
Brought on disaster and o'erturned the state.
How saith the seer, the man of Grace and wisdom?
"King though thou art serve God. Great fears oppress
The heart that is devoid of thankfulness."
Day darkened to Jamshíd, he lost the Grace
That lighteneth the world, and though with tears
Of blood he sought for pardon Grace was not,
And dread of coming evil was his lot.

§ 2

The Story of Zahhák and his Father

One of the desert spear-armed Bedouins
Of noble birth then lived—a virtuous king, V. 28
Just, highborn, generous, and hight Mardás,
Who sought his God with reverence and sighs,
He kept a thousand head of all milch cattle,
Goats, camels, sheep, and kine—a gentle breed—
With Arab steeds, all timid beauties they,
And grudged the milk to none. He had a son
Whom much he loved—Zahhák, a gallant prince,
But hasty. People called him Bíwarasp.
Ten thousand is "bíwar" in ancient Persian,
And he possessed ten thousand Arab steeds
With golden equipage—a famous stud.
Most of his days and nights he spent on horseback

Engaged in superintendence not in war.
One day Iblís approached him as a friend
And led his wits astray. The youth gave ear
With pleasure and all unsuspectingly
Gave to Iblís heart, reason, and pure soul,
And heaped the dust on his own head. Iblís
Exulted seeing that the youth was snared
And gulled the simpleton with specious words,
Thus saying: "I could tell thee many things
Known to myself alone."
The youth made answer:—
"Tell me at once, my worthy monitor!"
V. 29 Iblìs replied: "First promise, then my story."
The guileless youth swore as Iblís dictated:—
"Thy secret shall be kept, thy bidding done."
Then said Iblís: "Great prince! shall any rule
Here but thyself? What profiteth a sire
With such a son? Now hearken to my rede:
The lifetime of this ancient potentate
Continueth, thou art shelved. Séize on his court
And goods. His place will suit thee, thou shalt be
King of the world if thou durst do my bidding."
Zahhák looked grave; to shed his sire's blood grieved him.
He said: "Not so, suggest some other course:
This cannot be."
"Then thou," Iblís rejoined,
"Art perjured and wilt still be despicable,
Thy father honoured."
Thus he snared the Arab,
Who asked: "What must I do? I will obey."
Iblís replied: "Leave me to scheme. Thy head
Shall touch the sun. I only ask thy silence;
No help need I, myself am competent,
But keep the sword of speech within the scabbard."

Now in the palace was a jocund garth,
And thither used Mardás to go at dawn
To bathe him ere he prayed, without a slave
To light him on his way, The wicked Dív,
Intent on ill, dug in the garden-path
A deep pit, masked and made it good with boughs. V. 30
Ere dawn the Arab chieftain hied him thither
And, as he reached the pit, his fortunes fell;
That good man tumbled, broke his back, and died.
He ne'er had breathed a cold breath on his son,
But cherished him and lavished treasure on him,
Yet that abandoned youth respected not
His father, but conspired to shed his blood.
I heard a sage once say: "Though fierce in strife
No son will dare to take his father's life;
If such a crime should seem to be implied,
Seek for the reason on the mother's side."
Vile and unjust Zahhák thus seized the throne,
Assumed the Arabs' crown and governed them
For good or ill.
Iblís encouraged thus
Began again and said: "Since thou hast turned
To me, and gained thy heart's desire, come pledge me
Thy word once more to do as I require;
And then thy realm shall spread throughout the world,
Birds, beasts, and fishes shall be all thine own."
When this was said he set about to use,
Most marvellous! another kind of ruse.

§ 3

How Iblís turned Cook

Then as a youth well spoken, clean, and clever, V. 31
Iblís went to Zahhák with fawning words,

"Let me," he said, "who am a noted cook,
Find favour with the king."
By appetite
Seduced, Zahhák received and welcomed him,
So that the monarch's faithful minister
Gave to Iblís the royal kitchen's key.
Foods then were few, men did not kill to eat
But lived on vegetals of all earth's produce;
So evil-doing Áhriman designed
To slaughter animals for food, and served
Both bird and beast. He fed the king on blood
To make him lion-fierce, and like a slave
Obeyed him. First he fed his lord on yelk
To make him strong; he liked the flavour much
And praised Iblís, who said: "Illustrious monarch!
For ever live! To-morrow I will serve thee
So as to please thee well."
All night he mused
What strange repast to proffer on the morrow,
And when the azure vault brought back again
The golden Gem he hopefully presented
A meal of partridges and silver pheasants.
V. 32 The Arab monarch ate and his small wits
Were lost in admiration. On the third day
Iblís served lamb and fowl, and on the fourth
A chine of veal with saffron and rosewater,
Musk and old wine. Zahhák when he had tasted,
In wonder at his cook's ability,
Said: "Worthy friend! ask thou my recompense."
He answered: "Live, O king! in wealth and power.
My heart is thine, thy favour my soul's food;
Yet would I ask one boon above my station:
'Tis leave to kiss and lay my face and eyes
Upon thy shoulders."
Off his guard Zahhák
Replied: "I grant it; it may do thee grace."

Iblís received permission, kissed and vanished.
A marvel followed—from the monarch's shoulders
Grew two black snakes. Distraught he sought a cure
And in the end excised them, but they grew
Again! oh strange! like branches from a tree.
The ablest leeches gave advice in turn
And used their curious arts but all in vain.
At length Iblís himself came hurrying
Dight as a leech. "This was thy destiny,"
He said; "cut not the snakes but let them live.
Give them men's brains and gorge them till they sleep. V. 33
It is the only means, such food may kill them."
The purpose of the foul Dív shrewdly scan:
Had he conceived perchance a secret plan
To rid the world of all the race of man?

§ 4

How the Fortunes of Jamshíd went to Wrack

Thereafter tumult, combating and strife
Arose throughout Írán, the bright day gloomed
And men renounced Jamshíd, who when his Grace
Was darkened turned to folly and perverseness.
Pretenders started up, on every march
The disaffected nobles levied troops
And strove. Some set forth for Arabia,
For they had heard: "There is a monarch there—
An awe-inspiring king of dragon-visage."
Thus all the discontented cavaliers
Went to Zahhák and offered fealty,
Saluting him as monarch of Írán.
The king of dragon-visage came like wind
And donned the Íránian crown, collected troops—
The bravest of Arabia and Írán—

And having seized the throne of Sháh Jamshíd
Slipped on the world as 'twere a finger-ring.
Thus fell Jamshíd. Pressed by the world's new lord
He fled, surrendering crown, throne and treasure,
Host, power and diadem. The world turned black
V. 34 To him, he disappeared and yielded all.
He was in hiding for a century,
But in the hundredth year the impious Sháh
Appeared one day beside the sea of Chín.
Zahhák clutched him forthwith, gave him small respite,
And sawing him asunder freed the world
From him and from the fear that he inspired.
Long was he hidden from the Dragon's breath,
But there was no escaping in the end,
For fortune whirled him like a yellow straw
And both his throne and greatness passed away.
What better Sháh was ever on the throne,
And yet what profit could he call his own
From all his toils? His seven centuries
Brought him great blessings and calamities.
What need hast thou then for a length of years?
The world will keep its secrets though for food
It give thee sweets and honeycomb, and rude
Ungentle voices banish from thine ears.
Wilt thou then say: "Its love is spent on me,
In every look affection is expressed?"
Wilt thou confide therein caressingly
And tell it all the secrets of thy breast?
'Twill play with thee a pretty game indeed
Anon, and cause thy wretched heart to bleed.
My heart is weary of this Wayside Inn:
O God! release me soon from toil therein.

V

ZAHHÁK

HE REIGNED A THOUSAND YEARS

ARGUMENT

With the accession of Zahhák evil becomes triumphant everywhere. He practises and encourages black arts, idolatry, and human sacrifice. He has a warning dream concerning his destined conqueror Farídún, whom he strives in vain to capture. At length the people, driven to exasperation by Zahhák, revolt to Farídún at the instigation of Káwa the smith. Farídún and Zahhák meet, and the latter is taken prisoner.

NOTE

Zahhák, as we have already seen,[1] was originally an evil spirit of the Indo-Iránian nature-worship. In the Zandavasta he still occasionally appears in his character of water-stealer. "Zarathustra asked Ardvi Súra Anáhita" (Anaitis, the good genius of the waters): "'O Ardvi Súra Anáhita! With what manner of sacrifice shall I worship thee? . . . So that Mazda (Urmuzd) may make thee run down (to the earth), so that he may not make thee run up into the heavens, above the sun; and that the Serpent may not injure thee.'"[2]

More generally, however, he is represented as a fiend, created by Áhriman to vex the Iránian race, and carry off the light of sovereignty; while in the Sháhnáma he loses to a great extent his supernatural character, and is, as already has been pointed out,[3] the protagonist of the Semitic race in their dealings with the

[1] Introd. p. 7. [2] DZA, ii. 74. [3] Introd. p. 54.

people of Írán. He is accordingly represented as a native of Arabia, to have invaded Írán, and to have had his capital at a city which is perhaps best identified with Babylon. We read in the Zandavasta: "To her (*i.e.* Anaitis) did Azi Daháka (Zahhák), the three-mouthed, offer up a sacrifice in the land of Bawri, with a hundred male horses, a thousand oxen, and ten thousand lambs. He begged of her a boon, saying: 'Grant me this boon, O good, most beneficent Ardvi Súra Anáhita! that I may make all the seven Karshvares (Climes) of the earth empty of men.' Ardvi Súra Anáhita did not grant him that boon. . . . To her did Thraétaona (Farídún), the heir of the valiant Áthwya clan, offer up a sacrifice . . . saying: 'Grant me this, O good, most beneficent Ardvi Súra Anáhita! that I may overcome Azi Daháka, the three-mouthed, the three-headed, the six-eyed . . . that dèmon, baleful to the world . . . that Angra Mainyu (Áhriman) created against the material world, to destroy the world of the good principle; and that I may deliver his two wives, Savanghavák (Shahrináz) and Erenavák (Arnawáz), who are the fairest of body amongst women, and the most wonderful creatures in the world.'"[1]

Zahhák's palace is called in the Zandavasta Kviri*n*ta, which may mean in the Avasta language "a stork." There is a legend that the palace was in the form of that bird.[2]

We learn from the Dínkard that the legend of Zahhák was contained in the *Kitradád* and *Súdkar* Nasks of the Zandavasta. The latter Nask contained information "About the smiting *by* Frédún, for the sake of killing Dahák; the striking of *his* club upon the nape of the neck, the heart, and even the skull; and Dahák's not dying from that beating. Then smiting *him* with a sword, and the formation of noxious creatures of many kinds, from the body of Dahák, at the first, second, and third blow. The exclamation of the creator Aúharmazd to Frédún thus: 'Thou shouldst not cut him who is Dahák, because if thou shouldst cut him, Dahák would be making this earth full of serpents, toads, scorpions, lizards, tortoises, and frogs;' with the mode of binding *him* with awful fetters, in the most grievous punishment of confinement. This, too, *that* when *Az-í* Dahák was bound, the report of the same proceeded thus through all the regions, which are seven, that downstricken is *Az-í* Dahák, but he *who* smote *him* is Frédún the Áspikán, the exalted *and* mighty . . . and those which are evil do not mention *Az*, nor demand the virtuous maiden with importunity, nor even coveted wealth. This, too, that when information came to him of women *or* property, that

[1] DZA, ii. 60–62 and notes.

[2] *Id.* 253 and note.

seemed to him desirable to possess, *they were* then admitted by him into a golden cage."[1]

Zahhák is looked upon in the Sháhnáma as exemplifying in his own person all the chief characteristics of the non-Aryan peoples with whom the Íránians came in contact—idolatry, black arts, serpent-worship, and human sacrifice. It is a remarkable fact, as is pointed out by Fergusson,[1] that serpent-worship seems always to have been accompanied by human sacrifice. He also appears to consider that the former was essentially Túránian, not Aryan or Semitic, and he points out that in the bas-relief at Nakhs-i-Rustam, in which Urmuzd is represented as bestowing the crown on Ardshír Pápakán, the first Sháh of the Sásánian dynasty, the god is seated on a horse, and beneath his feet lies Ardawán, the last king of the Parthian dynasty, with two serpents round his head.[2]

In the Sháhnáma, however, Zahhák is essentially Semitic, and his reign of a thousand years may be taken as typifying that race in their relations to the Íránians from the earliest traditions of Assyrian oppression to the political overlordship of the Khalífas of Baghdad in the poet's own days.

The reader will notice that Zahhák is not slain by Farídún but imprisoned—a point indicative of his supernatural character; and also that the legend of Káwa the smith is, as one would naturally expect, a West Íránian tradition, as shown by its association with the city of Ispahán. The historical flag of the Persian empire, known as the flag of Káwa, the traditional origin of which will be found in the text, fell into the hands of the Muhammadans at the battle of Kádisiyya, A.D. 637. The natives of the town of Damáwand, situated on the south side of the mountain of that name, still celebrate a feast, called "Íd-i-Kúrdí," or the Kúrds' Holiday, to commemorate the death of Zahhák,[3] while a cyclopean terrace in the neighbourhood is pointed out as the place where, in accord to Eastern usage, his drums were beaten at dawn.[4]

Zahhák's minister, Kundrav, has had a strange eventful mythological history. In the Vedas he appears as Gandháva, the divine guardian of the Soma—the sacred drink-offering, the Homa of Írán. In the Zandavasta he is a monstrous fiend or monster known as Gandarewa or Gandarep, the slaying of whom was one

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[1] WPT, iv. 27, 214.
[2] "Tree and Serpent Worship," p. 3, 2nd ed. 1873.
[3] *Id.* pp. 42–44.
[4] Morier, "A Second Journey through Persia," p. 357.
[5] GHP, i. 31.

of the great feats of the ancient Íránian hero Garshásp.[1] In the Sháhnáma he is represented as a human being—the factotum of Zahhák. The two are a good illustration of the relationship that exists between Indian and Íránian mythology, between the Vedas and the Zandavasta, and of the genesis of the legends of the Sháhnáma.

Some readers may like to see the version of the legend of Zahhák as given in the Armenian History attributed to Moses of Chorene, which though subsequent to his time is probably centuries anterior to the Sháhnáma, and shows that the legend was known in all its essential features long before Firdausí's days. It runs thus in Whiston's Latin version of the original:—

"Quid autem tibi sunt voluptati viles ac vanae de Byraspe Astyage[2] fabulae? aut cur nobis ineptos atque insulsos, ac rationis expertes Persarum sermones, laborem imponis explicandi, nempe de primo ejus benefacto malefico, Daemoniisque ei ministrantibus, útque errorem & falsitatem frustrari non potuerit, ac super humerorum osculatione, unde Draconum ortus fuit, ac deinde flagitii frequentia homines per ventris usum perdidit; útque Rhodanes[3] quidem posteà catenis eum aeneis constrinxerit, atque in montem, qui vocatur Dembavendus, abduxerit . . . is qui scelera machinabatur, domi eum forîsque sine suspicione erudire solebat, in Byraspis humeris caput reponens, ac maleficas artes in aurem inculcans, unde in fabulis narrant, puerum Satanae, ministrum ei fuisse, ejúsque voluntati obsecundâsse; útque etiam subinde, quasi praemium ab eo postulans, humeros ejus oscularetur. Caeterùm quod narrant, Dracones pullulâsse, sive ipsum Byraspem in Draconen prorsus mutatum fuisse, ita res se habet. Quippe cum immanem hominum numerum Daemoniis ille immolare coepisset, indignabunda multitudo ab eo tandem abalienata fuit, ísque igitur communi omnium consensu pulsus, ad montem supra memoratum confugit. Ibi, cum acriùs premeretur, sua eum caterva deseruit, quâ re confisi, qui eum persecuti erant, dies aliquot in iis locis residerunt. At Byraspes, cohortem dispersam cogens, ad inopinantes impetum facit (*sic*) magnúmque attulit detrimentum; sed vicit tandem multitudo, & Byraspes se in fugam contulit, quem comprehensum propè eum montem peremerunt, atque in magnam sulphuris foveam conjecerunt."[4]

For the mythological account of Abtín, the father of Farídún, see the introductory note to the next reign. His legend up

[1] See introductory note to the next reign.

[2] See Introd. p. 72.

[3] *I.e.* Farídún.

[4] *Mosis Chorenensis*, ed. Whiston, 77–80.

to the point where it is taken up in the Sháhnáma may be briefly summarised as follows. He was the head of a family of Persian landowners or thanes who dwelt in the Alburz range to the south of the Caspian and claimed to be descended from Jamshíd. He began the war of independence against Zahhák, but after some success was forced to take refuge with the remnant of his adherents at the court of the king of Ghílán, who received him kindly, but, fearing the vengeance of Zahhák, subsequently furnished him with ships and provisions, and dismissed him to seek his fortune elsewhere. After a month's voyage on the Caspian Abtín arrived at the court of the king of the Scythians, whose daughter Farának fell in love with him. Incidents similar to those in the story of Zál and Rúdába in the present volume followed. In the end Abtín married Farának, by whom he had two sons, and lived happily and in high favour with his father-in-law. He could not rest, however. In dream after dream he was incited to resume the war of independence against Zahhák, and at length, in spite of the opposition of his father-in-law, set sail with wife, family, and adherents, and after various adventures landed near Ámul in Mázandarán, where he made his home in the surrounding forests. Here he gathered a band of followers and resumed his guerilla warfare against Zahhák, in the midst of which Farídún was born, the birth being heralded by many prodigies. At this point the Sháhnáma takes up the story.[1]

§ 1

The Evil Customs of Zahhák and the Device of Irmá'íl and Karmá'íl

Zahhák sat on the throne a thousand years V. 35
Obeyed by all the world. Through that long time
The customs of the wise were out of vogue,
The lusts of madmen flourished everywhere,
All virtue was despised, black art esteemed,
Right lost to sight, disaster manifest;
While dívs accomplished their fell purposes
And no man spake of good unless by stealth.

[1] The above is summarised from GHP, i. 171, 211, &c.

Two sisters of Jamshíd, their sex's crown,
Were brought out trembling like a willow-leaf.
Of those two ladies visaged like the moon
The names were Shahrináz and Arnawáz.
Men bore them to the palace of Zahhák
And gave them over to the dragon king,
Who educated them in evil ways
And taught them sorcery and necromancy.
The only teaching that he knew was bad—
To massacre, to pillage, and to burn.
Each night two youths of high or lowly birth
Were taken to the palace by the cook,
Who having slaughtered them took out their brains
To feed the snakes and ease the monarch's anguish.
Now in the realm were two good high-born Persians—
The pious Irmá'íl and Karmá'íl
The prescient. Talking of the lawless Sháh,
Of his retainers and those hideous meals,
One said: "By cookery we might approach
The Sháh, and by our wits devise a scheme
V. 36 To rescue one from each pair doomed to death."
They went and learned that art. The clever twain
Became the monarch's cooks and joyed in secret.
The time for shedding blood and taking life
Came, and some murderous minions of the Sháh
Dragged to the cooks with violence two youths
And flung them prone. The livers of the cooks
Ached, their eyes filled with blood, their hearts with wrath,
And each glanced at the other as he thought
Of such an outrage by the Sháh. They slew
One of the youths and thought it best to mingle
His precious brains with sheep's and spare the other,
To whom they said: "Make shift to hide thyself,
Approach not any dwelling-place of man,
Thine are the wastes and heights."

A worthless head
Thus fed the serpents, and in every month
The cooks preserved from slaughter thirty youths,
And when the number reached two hundred saved
Provided them, the donors all unknown,
With sheep and goats, and sent them desertward.
Thus sprang the Kúrds, who know no settled home,
But dwell in woollen tents and fear not God.
Zahhák was wont, such was his evil nature,
To choose him one among his warriors
And slay him for conspiring with the dívs.
Moreover, all the lovely noble maidens
Secluded in their bowers, not tanged of tongues,
He took for handmaids. Not a jot had he V. 37
Of faith, king's uses, or morality.

§ 2

How Zahhák saw Farídún in a Dream

Observe God's dealings with Zahhák when he
Had forty years to live. One longsome night
He slumbered in the arms of Arnawáz,
And saw a vision of three warriors—
Boughs of the tree of kings. The youngest one,
Who held the middle place, was cypress tall,
In face, in armour, and in mien a king.
He rushed with ox-head mace to fight Zahhák,
Smote him upon the head, stripped off his skin,
And used it as a rope to bind his hands
Firm as a rock,[1] placed on his neck a yoke,
Then casting earth and dust upon his head

[1] Cf. Keresáspa's account of his treatment of Gandarep. See introductory note to Farídún.

Dragged him before the crowd in shame and anguish
Toward Mount Damáwand.
The tyrant writhed:
Thou wouldst have said: "His liver split with fright."
He yelled. The palace of the hundred columns
Shook, and the sun-faced ladies left their couches,
While Arnawáz said to him: "Sháh! what was it?
Confide in me; thou wast asleep in peace
At home! What saw'st thou? Say what came to thee?
The world is at thy will, beast, dív, and man
v. 38 Watch o'er thee and the seven climes are thine—
All 'twixt the moon and Fish.[1] What made thee start?
O master of the world! Oh! answer me."
The chief replied: "I may not tell, or else
Ye will despair my life."
Then Arnawáz:—
"Be pleased to tell us; we perchance may find
A cure, no ill is irremediable."
He told them every whit, then said the Fair:—
"Neglect it not but seek a remedy.
Thy throne's seat is the signet of the age,
Thy famous fortune brighteneth the world,
Beneath thy finger-ring thou hast the earth
With all its fairies, dívs, beasts, fowls, and men.
Call both the archmages and astrologers—
The wisest of each realm—and tell them all.
See if the hand that threateneth thy life
Is that of fairy, dív, or man. This known
Act vigorously; quail not before thy foes."
The lady's counsel pleased the Sháh.
Night then
Was dark as raven's plumes, but when at length
The Lamp showed o'er the hills, and thou hadst said,
"Strewed yellow gems upon the azure vault,"

[1] See Introd. p. 71.

Zahhák brought archimages shrewd of heart
And told to them the dream that pierced his liver.
He said: "Expound this dream without delay, V. 39
And make my soul a pathway toward the light."
He asked them privily about the future,
Demanding: "What will be my latter end,
And who succeed me? Tell or hide your heads
In shame."
They talked together sad at heart,
With parched lips and with sallow countenances:
They said: "If we tell truly what is fated
We shall be tortured, haply lose our lives;
And if we do not act straightforwardly
As well wash hands of life."
None dared to speak:
Their fortune was in jeopardy three days.
Upon the fourth the Sháh was wroth, exclaiming:—
"Foretell the future or be hung alive."
They drooped their heads, their hearts were rent, their eyes
Wept tears of blood. Among them was a man,
Wise, honest, prescient, by name Zirak—
The chief of all the band of archimages.
Concerned but fearless he addressed Zahhák:—
"Indulge no vapouring for none is born
Except to die. There have been kings ere thee
Fit for the throne of power. Both griefs and joys
Enough they reckoned up yet their time came.
If thou wert standing there— an iron wall—
Yon heaven would grind thee, thou wouldst not endure.
One will hereafter take thy throne and fling
Thy fortune to the ground. His name is Farídún,
And he will be a royal heaven to earth.
As yet he is not born, thy time of woe V. 40
Hath not arrived, but when his honoured mother
Hath borne him he will be a fruitful tree.

At man's estate his head will reach the moon
And he will seek thy belt, crown, throne, and casque.
In stature a tall cypress, he will shoulder
A mace of steel, will smite thy head therewith
And drag thee from the palace to the street
In bonds."
"Why bind me," said the impious king,
"In vengeance?"
Then Zirak: "Wert thou but wise . . . !
But all make pretexts for injurious acts.
Thy hand will slay his father and that wrong
Will fill the son's brains with revengeful thoughts:
Besides the nurse of this young atheling—
The cow, Birmáya hight—will perish too
By thy hand; so in vengeance he will brandish
An ox-head mace."
Zahhák heard anxiously,
And swooned upon his throne. The noble archmage
Turned him and fled away in dread of ill.
The Sháh recovered and resumed his seat.
He diligently sought throughout the world
For traces faint or clear of Farídún;
No food, no slumber, or repose took he,
His daylight turned to lapislazuli.

§ 3

The Birth of Farídún

Years passed away, calamity approached
The dragon-king, the blesséd Farídún
Was born, the fashion of the world was changed.
Of cypress height he shone forth with the Grace
Of kings of kings which erst Jamshíd possessed,

Was like the sun, as needful as the rain
To earth and fit as knowledge to the mind;
Revolving heaven loved him tenderly. V. 41
Then lived the cow Birmáya, chief of kine,
Born with a coat all bright and peacock-hued.
The wise, the archmages, and astrologers
Collected round her; none had seen or heard
Of such a cow before.
Meanwhile Zahhák
Was searching everywhere, and filling earth
With hue and cry, till Farídún became
A source of danger to his sire Abtín,
Who fled for life but to the Lion's toils,
For certain of the followers of Zahhák,
That impious monarch, met Abtín one day,
Seized him and bore him, like a cheetah bound,
Before the Sháh, who had him put to death.
When Farídún's wise mother Farának,
A glorious dame devoted to her child,
Perceived her husband's evil fate she fled;
And came heart-broken weeping to the field
Wherein the beautiful Birmáya was.
Still shedding drops of blood she bade the hind:—
"Protect this suckling for me, be a father
To him, and give him milk of yon fair cow.
Ask what thou wilt, e'en to my soul 'tis thine."
The hind replied: "I will perform thy bidding
And be as 'twere a slave before thy child."
Then Farának resigned the babe to him, V. 42
With all instructions that were requisite,
And that wise guardian like a father fed
The child for three years with Birmáya's milk;
But as Zahhák ne'er wearied of the search,
And as the cow was talked of everywhere,
The mother hasted to the field again

And spake thus to the guardian of her child:—
"A prudent thought—a thought inspired by God—
Hath risen in my heart. What we must do
Is this—there is no remedy, my son
And my dear life are one—I must abandon
This land of sorcerers, depart unmarked
To Hindústán and bear him to Alburz."
Then like a roe or one who rideth post
She took the young child to that lofty mountain
Where dwelt a devotee dead to the world,
To whom she said: "I am, O holy one!
A woeful woman from Írán. Know thou
That this my noble son will be hereafter
The leader of his people, will discrown
Zahhák and tread his girdle in the dust.
Take thou this child and father him with care."
The good man took her child and never breathed
One cold breath on him.
When the rumour reached
Zahhák about the cow and field he went,
Like some mad elephant, and slew Birmáya,
With all the other cattle that he saw
Within the field, and harried all the land.
He went next to the home of Farídún,
Searched it, but all in vain, for none was found,
And burned the lofty palace to the ground.

§ 4

How Farídún questioned his Mother about his Origin

Now Farídún, when twice eight years had passed,
Sought out his mother on the plain and said:—
"Disclose thy secret, say who is my father,

What is my lineage, whom shall I declare
Myself in public? Let me have the truth."
She said: "I will tell all, my noble boy!
Within Írán erewhile lived one Abtín,
Of royal race, discerning mind, wise, brave,
And inoffensive, sprung from Tahmúras;
Abtín knew all the pedigree. Thy sire
And my dear spouse was he; my days were dark
When we were parted. Now Zahhák the warlock
Stretched from Írán his hand against thy life,
But I concealed thee. Oh! what woeful days
I passed while that brave youth—thy father—forfeited
His own sweet life for thee! Now on Zahhák
The warlock's shoulders grew two snakes which sucked
The life-breath of Irán, and thy sire's brains
Were taken from his head to feed them. I
In course of time came on an open pasture,
As yet unknown to fame, and there beheld
A cow like jocund spring, well shaped and coloured
From head to foot: before her sat her herd
Upon his heels as one before a king.
I put thee in his charge. For long he nursed thee V. 44
Upon his breast, the cow of peacock-hues
Supplying thee with milk that made thee thrive
Like some bold crocodile, until the tidings
Of cow and meadow reached the Sháh, and then
I bare thee from the pasture in all haste
And fled Írán and home and family.
He came and slew the noble, tender nurse
That could not speak to thee, then sent the dust
Up from our home and turned it to ditch."
The prince, enraged thereat, mused on revenge,
And said with aching heart and knitted brows:—
"The lion groweth brave by venturing,

And since the sorcerer hath done his part
Mine is to take my scimitar and lay
His palace in the dust; such is God's will."
She said: "This is not well; thou canst not stand
Alone against the world. He hath the crown
And throne, and troops at his command, who come
From all the realm to battle when he willeth,
A hundred thousand strong. View not the world
With boyish eyes; the laws of blood-revenge
Demand it not. Drunk with the wine of youth
Men think themselves the only ones on earth
And vapour, but be thy days mirth and joy.
Do thou, my son! bear this advice in mind,
Give all words save thy mother's to the wind."

§ 5

The Story of Zahhák and Káwa the Smith

Zahhák had "Farídún" upon his lips
V. 45 Both day and night, his lofty stature bent
Beneath the terrors of his heart until
One day, when sitting on the ivory throne
And wearing on his head the turquoise crown,
He called the notables from every province
To firm the bases of his sovereignty,
And said to them: "Good, wise, illustrious men!
I have, as sages wot, an enemy
Concealed, and I through fear of ill to come
Despise not such though weak. I therefore need
A larger host—men, dívs, and fairies too—
And ask your aid, for rumours trouble me;
So sign me now a scroll to this effect:—
'Our monarch soweth naught but seeds of good,
He ever speaketh truth and wrongeth none.'"

Those upright men both young and old subscribed
Their names upon the Dragon's document,
Against their wills, because they feared the Sháh.
Just then was heard outside the palace-gate
The voice of one that clamoured for redress.
They called him in before the Sháh and set him
Among the paladins. Zahhák in dudgeon
Said: "Tell us who hath wronged thee."
Then the man
Smote on his head before the Sháh and cried:—
"O Sháh! my name is Káwa and I sue
For justice. Do me right. I come in haste
Accusing thee in bitterness of soul;
An act of justice will enhance thy greatness. V. 46
I have had many an outrage at thy hands,
For thou hast stabbed my heart unceasingly,
And if the outrages had not thy sanction
Why hath my son been taken? I had once
In this world eighteen sons: but one is left!
Have mercy! Look on me this once! My liver
Is ever burning! What is mine offence,
O Sháh? Oh, say! If I have not offended
Seek not occasion 'gainst the innocent,
Regard my plight and save thyself from woe.
My back is bent with length of years, despair
Hath seized my heart, my head is all distraught,
My youth is gone, my children are no more,
And children are the nearest kin on earth.
Oppression hath a middle and an end,
And pretext ever. Tell me what is thine
For wronging me and ruining my life.
A smith am I, an inoffensive man,
Upon whose head the Sháh is pouring fire,
And thou art he, and, though of dragon-form,
Must still do justice in this cause of mine.

Since thou dost rule the seven provinces
Why should the toil and hardship all be ours?
We have accounts to settle—thou and I—
And all will be aghast if they shall show
That this my son hath perished in his turn
With all the rest to feed those snakes of thine."
The monarch listened and was sore amazed.
They set the young man free and strove to win
The father by fair words, but when Zahhák
Bade him subscribe the scroll he read it through
And shouted to the ancients of the realm:—
V. 47 "Confederates of the Dív with impious hearts!
Ye set your faces hellward and have yielded
To that man's bidding. I will not subscribe,
Or ever give the Sháh another thought."
He shouted, rose in fury, rent the scroll
And trampled it; then with his noble son
In front of him went raving to the street.
But all the courtiers blessed the Sháh and said:—
"Illustrious king of earth! may no cold blast
From heaven pass o'er thee on the day of battle.
Why was this insolent Káwa countenanced
As though a friend of thine? He tore the scroll,
Refusing to obey thee, and is gone
Bent on revenge and leagued, as thou wouldst say,
With Farídún! A viler deed than this
We never saw and marvel such should be."
He answered quickly: "I will tell you wonders.
When Káwa entered and I heard his cries,
A mount of iron seemed to rise betwixt us;
And when he beat his head a strange sensation
Convulsed me. How 'twill end I cannot tell;
The secrets of the sky are known to none."
When Káwa left the presence of the Sháh,
A crowd assembled in the market-place.

And still he shouted, crying out for aid
And urging all to stand upon their rights.
He took a leathern apron, such as smiths
Wear to protect their legs while at the forge,
Stuck it upon a spear's point and forthwith
Throughout the market dust began to rise.
He passed along with spear in hand exclaiming:—
"Ye men of name! Ye worshippers of God!
Whoe'er would 'scape the fetters of Zahhák V. 48
Let him resort with me to Farídún
And shadow in his Grace. Come ye to him;
The ruler here is Áhriman—God's foe."
So that poor leather, worthless as it was,
Discriminated friends and enemies.
He took the lead, and many valiant men
Resorted to him; he rebelled and went
To Farídún. When he arrived shouts rose.
He entered the new prince's court, who marked
The apron on the spear and hailed the omen.
He decked the apron with brocade of Rúm
Of jewelled patterns on a golden ground,
Placed on the spearpoint a full moon—a token
Portending gloriously—and having draped it
With yellow, red, and violet, he named it
The Káwian flag. Thenceforth when any Sháh
Acceded to the throne, and donned the crown,
He hung the worthless apron of the smith
With still more jewels, sumptuous brocade,
And painted silk of Chín. It thus fell out
That Káwa's standard grew to be a sun
Amid the gloom of night, and cheered all hearts.
Time passed and still the world maintained its secret.
When Farídún saw matters thus, and all men
Submiss to vile Zahhák, he came to Farának
With girded loins, crowned with a royal casque,

And said: "I go to battle, but do thou
Devote thyself to prayer. The Maker ruleth.
In weal and woe alike clasp hands to Him."
With tears and bleeding heart she cried: "O God!
My trust hath been in Thee. Turn from my son
V. 49 The onslaughts of the wicked on his life,
And rid the world of these infatuates."
Then Farídún gat ready with despatch
And secrecy. He had two brothers, both
Of noble birth and older than himself,
Hight Kaiánúsh and prosperous Purmáya.
He said to them: "Live, gallant hearts! in joy.
Revolving heaven bringeth naught but good;
The crown of power is coming back to us.
Provide me cunning smiths and let them make me
A massive mace."
They sought the smiths' bázár
In haste, whence all the aspiring craftsmen went
To Farídún, who taking compasses
Showed to the smiths the pattern, tracing it
Upon the ground. It had a buffalo's head.
They took the work in hand, and having wrought
A massive mace they bore it to the hero.
It shone as brightly as the noonday sun,
And Farídún, approving of the work,
Bestowed upon the makers raiment, gold,
And silver, holding out to them beside
Bright hopes and promise of advancement, saying:—
"If I shall lay the Dragon in the dust
I will not leave the dust upon your heads,
But justify the entire world, since I
Have Him in mind who judgeth righteously."

§ 6

How Farídún went to Battle with Zahhák

With head raised o'er the sun he girt his loins
For vengeance for his father, and set forth
Upon the day Khurdád right joyfully
With favouring stars and splendid auguries.
The troops assembled at his gate, his throne
Was lifted to the clouds. The first to go
Were baggage and provisions for the army V. 50
On buffaloes and high-necked elephants.
Purmáya rode with Kaiánúsh beside
The Sháh, like younger brothers and true friends.
He went like wind from stage to stage; revenge
Was in his head and justice in his heart.
The warriors on their Arab chargers reached
A spot where people dwelt who worshipped God,
And Farídún dismounting greeted them.
When night was darkening one in friendly guise
Approached him, walking with a measured tread,
With musky hair descending to the feet
And favoured like a maid of Paradise.
It was Surúsh, who came thence to advise
The king of good and ill, came like a fairy
And taught him privily the magic art,
That he might know the key of every lock
And by his spells bring hidden things to light;
While Farídún, perceiving that the work
Was God's not Áhriman's or come of evil,
Flushed like a cercis-bloom and joyed to see
How lusty he and his young fortune were.
The cooks prepared a feast—a noble banquet,
One fit for mighty men. Now Farídún,
The drinking done, being heavy sought repose.

His brothers, seeing that God sped his cause,
And that his fortune slumbered not, departed
Without delay to compass his destruction.
There was above their heads a lofty cliff
And underneath the Sháh slept peacefully.
His two abandoned brothers scaled the height
That night unseen, and scrupling at no crime
Set loose a mighty crag upon the brow
To fall directly on their brother's head,
V. 51 And kill him in his sleep. The crashing crag,
For God so ordered, roused the slumberer,
Who by his magic art arrested it
In mid career: it stopped dead. Farídún
Went on his way but kept the matter secret.
In front marched Káwa with the Káwian standard,
Soon to become the ensign of the realm.
Thus Farídún advanced, as one who sought
A diadem, toward the Arwand, or call it,
As Arabs do, the Dijla, if thou knowest not
The ancient tongue. He marched another stage
And came upon the Dijla, at Baghdád.
On drawing near he sent to greet the guard
And said: "Despatch to this side instantly
Your boats and vessels, bear me across with all
Mine army and let none be left behind."
The river-guard sent not his boats nor came
At Farídún's behest, but made reply:—
"The Sháh gave privy orders: 'Launch no boat
Without a passport under mine own seal.'"
The prince, enraged and fearless of the stream,
Girt like a king and bent upon revenge,
Plunged with his rose-red charger in the flood.
V. 52 With one accord his comrades girt themselves,
Turned toward the stream, and on their brave, fleet steeds

Plunged over saddle-back. The warriors' heads
Reeled while their swift steeds struggled with the tide,
And with their necks emerging seemed to be
The phantom cohort of a dream. The warriors
Reached the dry land undamped in their revenge
And set their faces toward Bait al Mukaddas.
This men called when they used the ancient tongue
Gang-i-Dizhukht; to-day 'tis known among
The Arabs as "The Holy Place." The fair
Tall palace of Zahhák was builded there.
When they approached the city that they sought,
And Farídún beheld it a mile off,
He saw a pile whose building towered o'er Saturn,
So that thou wouldst have said: "'Twill catch the stars!"
It shone like Jupiter in heaven; the place
Appeared all peace and love and happiness.
The hero recognised that seat of power
And springlike beauty as the Dragon's dwelling,
And said: "The man who reared a pile like that
From dust I fear me cottoneth with the world,
But still 'tis better to press on than tarry."
This said he grasped his massive mace and gave
His fleet steed rein, and thou hadst said: "A flame
Shot up before the guards."
He entered riding— V. 53
An inexperienced but valiant youth,
Who called upon the name of God—while they
That were on guard fled from him in dismay.

§ 7

How Farídún saw the Sisters of Jamshíd

Then Farídún o'erthrew the talisman,
Raised heaven-high by Zahhák, because he saw
That it was not of God, with massive mace

Laid low the sorcerers within the palace—
All fierce and notable dívs—and set himself
Upon the enchanter's throne. This done he took
Possession of the royal crown and palace,
But though he searched he failed to find Zahhák.
Then from the women's bower he brought two Idols
Sun-faced, dark-eyed; he had them bathed, he purged
The darkness of their minds by teaching them
The way of God and made them wholly clean;
For idol-worshippers had brought them up
And they were dazed in mind like drunken folk.
Then while the tears from their bright eyes bedewed
Their rosy cheeks those sisters of Jamshíd
Said thus to Farídún: "Mayst thou be young
Till earth is old! What star was this of thine,
O favoured one! What tree bore thee as fruit,
Who venturest inside the Lion's lair
So hardily, thou mighty man of valour?
What anguish and what bale have we endured
All through this dragon-shouldered Áhriman!
V. 54 Oh! what a miserable world for us
Did this infatuated sorcerer make!
Yet saw we never here a man so hardy,
Bold, and ambitious as to think that he
Could take the throne."
He answered: "Throne and fortune
Abide with none. My sire was fortune's favourite,
But still Zahhák seized on him in Írán
And slew him cruelly, so I have set
My face against Zahhák's throne in revenge.
He slew the cow Birmáya too—my nurse,
A very gem of beauty. What could he,
That villain, gain by slaughtering that dumb beast?
Now I am ready and I purpose war;
I came not from Írán to bring him pardon,

Or good will, but to brain him in revenge
With this ox-headed mace."
When Arnawáz
Heard this she guessed the secret, and replied:—
"Then thou art Farídún the Sháh and wilt
Abolish necromacy and black art,
For thou art fated to destroy Zahhák:
The binding of thy loins will loose the world.
We twain, pure, modest, and of royal seed,
Submitted only through the fear of death,
Else would we ever sleep or wake, O king!
Beside a serpent-spouse?"
Then Farídún:—
"If heaven over us shall do me right
I will cut off this Dragon from the earth,
And purge the world of its impurity.
Now speak the truth at once and tell me where
That vile one is."
Those fair dames told him all;
They thought: "The Dragon's head will meet the shears,"
And said: "He went to Hindústán to practise
Some spell-work in that land of sorcerers.
He will cut off a thousand innocent heads, V. 55
For he is terror-struck at evil fortune,
Because a seer hath said: 'Earth will be void
Of thee, for Farídún will seize thy throne
And thy prosperity wither in a moment.'
Struck by the words his heart is all aflame,
And life affordeth him no happiness.
Now is he slaughtering beasts and men and women
To make a bath of blood and thus defeat
That prophecy. Those serpents on his shoulders
Keep him in long and sore disquietude.

From clime to clime he roveth, for the snakes
Give him no rest. 'Tis time for his return,
But place there is not."
Stricken to the heart
That lovely pair revealed the mystery:
The exalted chieftain listened eagerly.

§ 8

The Story of Faríd́n and the Minister of Zahhák

Zahhák while absent left in charge of all
A man of wealth, who served him like a slave,
So that his master marvelled at his zeal,
One named Kundrav, because he used to limp[1]
Before the unjust king. He came in haste
And saw within the hall a stranger crowned,
Reposing on the throne, in person like
A cypress over which the full moon shineth,
On one side Shahrináz the cypress-slim,
Upon the other moon-faced Arnawáz.
The city swarmed with soldiers, and a guard
Stood ready armed before the palace-gate.
All undismayed, not asking what it meant,
Kundrav approached with lowly reverence,
Then offered homage, saying: "Live, O king!
V. 56 While time shall last. Blest be thy sitting here
In Grace, for thou deservest sovereignty.
The seven climes be thine and be thy head
Above the rain-clouds."
Being bid approach
He told the Sháh the secrets of his office
And was commanded: "Serve a royal feast,
Let wine be brought, call minstrels fit to hear,

[1] Firdausí's etymology must not be relied upon. See the introductory note to this reign.

To cheer me at the banquet, fill the goblet,
Spread out the board, and summon worthy guests."
Kundrav obeyed and brought bright wine and minstrels,
And noble guests whose birth entitled them.
So Farídún quaffed wine and chose the lays
And held that night a worthy festival.
Kundrav at dawn left the new prince in haste
And on a swift steed sought Zahhák. Arrived
He told the things that he had seen and heard :—
" O king of chiefs ! the token of thy fall
Hath come, three men of noble mien arrived
With troops; the youngest of the three, in height
A cypress and a king in face, is placed
Between the other two and hath precedence.
His mace is like a mountain-crag and shineth
Amid the host. He entered thine abode
On horseback, and the others rode with him—
A noble pair. He went and sat upon
The royal throne and broke thy charms and spells.
As for the dívs and warriors in thy palace
He struck their heads off as he rode along V. 51
And mingled brains and blood ! "
Zahhák replied :—
" 'Tis well, guests should enjoy themselves."
Kundrav
Retorted : " One that hath an ox-head mace !
Beware of such in coming and in going;
Besides, he sitteth boldly on thy couch,
Eraseth from the crown and belt thy name,
And maketh thine ungrateful folk his own :
If such a guest thou knowest know him such."
Zahhák said : " Trouble not, it bodeth well
When guests are at their ease."
Kundrav replied :—
" Yea, I have heard so ; hear thou my rejoinder :

If this great man be any guest of thine
What business hath he in thy women's bower?
He sitteth with the sisters of Jamshíd
The worldlord, taking counsel, while this hand
Is toying with the cheek of Shahrináz
And that with Arnawáz' carnelian lip.
At night he doth still worse and pilloweth
His head on musk! What musk? The locks of Moons
Who ever were the idols of thy heart."
Zahhák, wolf-savage, wished that he were dead.
With foul abuse he sternly hoarsely threatened
That luckless one: "No more shalt thou have charge
Of any house of mine."
Kundrav replied:—
"Henceforth, O king! I deem thy fortune shent.
How shouldst thou make me ruler in the city,
Or give me even minstrels' work, when thou
Hast lost the throne of power? For like a hair
From dough hast thou departed from the throne
Of sovereignty. Think, sire! what thou wilt do.
V. 58 Have thine own interests no concern for thee?
They ne'er before were in such jeopardy."

§ 9

How Farídún bound Zahhák

Roused by that talk Zahhák resolved to act,
And bade his keen-eyed roadsters to be saddled.
Now as he neared the city by a byway
With valiant dívs and warriors, and saw
His palace-roofs and gate he vowed revenge.
The troops of Farídún received the tidings
And flocked to meet him. Leaping from their steeds
They struggled hand to hand. The citizens,

Such as were warlike, manned the roofs and gates
For Farídún; Zahhák had maddened them.
Bricks from the walls, stones from the roofs, with swords
And poplar arrows in the street, were plied
As thick as hail; no place was left to stand.
The mountains echoed with the chieftains' shouts,
Earth trembled neath the chargers' tramping hoofs,
A cloud of black dust gathered, and the flints
Were pierced by javelins. From the Fane of Fire
One shouted: "If some wild beast had been Sháh,
We—young and old—had served him loyally,
But not that foul Zahhák with dragon-shoulders."
The warriors and citizens were blent
Together as they fought—a mass of men.
O'er that bright city rose a cloud of dust
That turned the sun to lapislazuli.
Anon Zahhák alone in jealous fear V. 59
Approached the palace, mailed, that none might know him.
Armed with a lasso sixty cubits long
He scaled the lofty edifice in haste
And saw beneath him dark-eyed Shahrináz,
Who toyed bewitchingly with Farídún.
Her cheeks were like the day, her locks like night,
Her lips were opened to revile Zahhák,
Who recognised therein the act of God—
A clutch of evil not to be evaded—
And with his brain inflamed by jealousy
Dropped one end of the lasso to the court
And so slid down from that high roof, regardless
Of throne and precious life. As he descended
He drew a keen-edged poniard from its sheath,
Told not his purpose or his name, but clutched
The steel-blue dagger in his hand, athirst
For blood—the blood of those two beauteous dames.

His feet no sooner rested on the ground
Than Farídún rushed on him like the wind
And beat his helm in with the ox-head mace.
"Strike not," cried blest Surúsh, who hurried thither,
"His time hath not yet come, but bind him vanquished
Firm as a rock and bear him to some gorge,
Where friends and kinsmen will not come to him."
When Farídún heard that he tarried not,
But gat a lasso made of lion's hide
And bound Zahhák around the arms and waist
With bonds that no huge elephant could snap,
Then sitting on Zahhák's own golden throne
Determined all the evil usages
And made a proclamation at the gate:—
"Ye citizens possessed of Grace and wisdom!
Disarm and follow but one path to fame,
V. 60 For citizens and soldiers may not seek
A common excellence; this hath his craft
And that his mace; their spheres are evident
And, if confounded, earth will be so too.
Depart rejoicing, each one to his work,
And live and prosper long, because the foul one,
Whose acts brought terror on the world, is bound."
Men hearkened to the great redoubted Sháh.
Then all the leading, wealthy citizens
Drew near with gladness bringing offerings
And heartily accepted Farídún,
Who graciously received them and discreetly
Gave each his rank's due, counselled them at large,
And offered up his prayers and thanks to God,
Then said: "The realm is mine, your fortune's star
Is bright, for me alone did God send forth
From Mount Alburz by Grace, and for your sakes,
To set the world free from the Dragon's bane.

Blest as we are by Him who giveth good
We ought to walk toward good upon His paths.
As king I may not tarry in one place,
Else would I pass with you a length of days."
The nobles kissed the ground. Anon the din
Of drums rose from the gate whereon all eyes
Were fixed, the people yelled against the man,
Whose days were almost sped: "Bring forth the Dragon
Bound in the lasso's coils as he deserveth."
The troops withdrew no wealthier than they came,
And took Zahhák, bound shamefully and flung
In wretched plight upon a camel's back
On this wise to Shírkhán. Call this world old[1]
Or ever thou shalt hear this story told.
What changes numberless have passed and still
Must pass hereafter over plain and hill!
Thus fortune's favourite bore Zahhák toward V. 61
Shírkhán, and driving him among the mountains
Was purposing to cast him headlong down,
When came the blest Surúsh and whispered thus
The prince in friendly wise: "Convey the captive
Thus to Mount Damáwand with speed, and take
No escort, or but what thy safety needeth."
He bore Zahhák as one that rideth post
And fettered him upon Mount Damáwand;
So when new bonds were added to the old,
And fate had not another ill in store,
The glory of Zahhák became like dust
And earth was cleansed from his abominations,
He was removed from kindred and from friends,
And bonds alone were left him in the mountains,
Where Farídún chose out a narrow gorge—
A chasm which he had marked of viewless depth—

[1] In the Persian, "Shírkhán," with one letter changed, would mean "call old."

And having studded it with heavy nails,
Whereon the brain might chafe, secured Zahhák,
Bound by the hands upon a crag, that so
His anguish might endure. Thus was he left
To hang: his heart's blood trickled to the ground.
Come let us, lest we tread the world for ill,
Be on attaining every good intent;
No good or evil will endure but still
Good furnisheth the better monument.
A lofty palace, wealth of every kind,
Will not avail; thy monument on earth
Will be the reputation left behind
And therefore deem it not of little worth.
No angel was the glorious Farídún,
Not musk and ambergris; he strove to win
By justice and beneficence the boon
Of greatness: be a Farídún therein.
By godlike travail undertaken he
First cleansed the world from its iniquity.
The binding of Zahhák, that loathly one
Devoid of justice, was the chief deed done.
V. 62 He next avenged the murder of Abtín,
Caused all the world to recognise his sway,
And lastly purged the surface of earth clean
Of madmen, and took miscreants' power away.
O world! how loveless and malign art thou
To breed the quarry and then hunt it down!
Lo! where is Farídún the valiant now,
Who took away from old Zahhák the crown?
Upon this earth five hundred years he reigned
And then departing left an empty throne;
Bequeathing earth to others, he retained
Of all that he possessed regret alone.
So is it with us whether great or small
And sheep or shepherd, 'tis the same with all.

VI

FARÍDÚN

HIS REIGN WAS FIVE HUNDRED YEARS

ARGUMENT

Farídún, when firmly established on the throne, marries his three sons to the three daughters of Sarv, king of Yaman, and subsequently dividing the earth into three parts gives one to each of his sons. The two elder, becoming envious of the youngest, murder him, and are themselves slain by the grandson of their murdered brother, Minúchihr, who succeeds to the throne after the death of Farídún.

NOTE

In the Vedas we find the expression Tritá Áptyá. Tritá is the name of a semi-divine personage, who is endowed with the gift of healing by the gods. Áptyá may be a proper name, a patronymic, or mere epithet. The fact that it is found in connection with other names besides Tritá's rather points to the last. We also find in the Vedas a hero named Traitaná, who is recorded to have slain a giant. Tritá and Traitaná, who were probably quite distinct personages originally, appear to have become confused together even in the Vedas themselves, the exploits of each were attributed to the other also, and the confusion was handed down to later times. Thus we find Tritá struggling with the storm-fiend for the possession of the waters,[1] and Traitaná endowed with the gift of healing. In the Zandavasta, Tritá Áptyá and Traitaná become three personages—Thrita, Áthwya, and Thraćtaona respectively. Thrita is there represented as the first healer, and also as the third who offered the drink-offering of the Haoma. The word Sáma is also associated with him, a word which is said to mean

[1] See Introd. p. 7.

"appeaser," with reference apparently to his medical powers. The priest and medicine-man were one originally. In reward for offering the Haoma two sons were born to Thrita, of whom one was the hero Keresáspa. Áthwya is represented as being the second to offer the Haoma, and as a reward for so doing a son is born to him too—Thraétaona, whose double character as hero and physician is clearly indicated. He is described as the smiter of the dragon Dahâka, and is also worshipped in his capacity as healer to avert or cure sickness. The word Sáma, originally an epithet applied to Thrita, became applied to his son Keresáspa as a patronymic. He is thus described as Sáma Keresáspa, and a special epithet is bestowed on him sometimes to the exclusion of other titles—that of Narimanau, "the manly minded."

He is described in the Zandavasta as "the holy Keresáspa, the Sáma, the club-bearer with plaited hair,[1] . . . the manly-hearted Keresáspa . . . he who was the sturdiest of the men of strength, next to Zarathustra, for his manly courage. For Manly Courage clave unto him. . . . Manly Courage, firm of foot, unsleeping, quick to rise, and fully awake, that clave unto Keresáspa."[2] Short accounts of his exploits occur in the Zandavasta,[3] but the fullest are found in a Pahlaví version of the fourteenth Fargard of the lost *Sádkar Nask*. It appears that Keresáspa, great as he was as a hero, fell a victim to the wiles of one of Áhriman's evil creations—the Pairika Knathaiti, who we are told "clave unto Keresáspa."[4] The Pairika is the Parí, our Peri or Fairy, and symbolises idolatry in Zoroastrian mythology.[5] Keresáspa therefore neglected the worship of fire and became an idolater. For this he was cast into hell, where he remained till Urmuzd, having heard him commended by Zoroaster, summoned him, and he pleaded to be released in consideration of the good works achieved by him while on earth. He urged that he slew the serpent Srórvbar, "which *was* swallowing horses *and* swallowing men, and its teeth were as long as my arm, its ear was as large as fourteen blankets, its eye was as large as a wheel, and its horn was as much as Dahák[6] in height. And I was running as much as half a day on *its* back, till *its* head *was* smitten by me at the neck *with* a club made for *my* hand, and *it was* slain outright by me . . . by me Gandarep[7] *was* slain outright, by whom twelve districts *were* devoured at once. When I looked among the teeth of Gandarep, dead men were sticking among his teeth ; and my beard *was* seized by him,

[1] DZA, ii. 223. [2] *Id.* 295. [3] *Id.*
[4] *Id.* i. 6. [5] *Id.*, note. [6] *i.e.* Zahhák.
[7] See introductory note to Zahhák.

and I dragged him out of the sea; nine days and nights the conflict *was* maintained by us in the sea, and then I became more powerful than Gandarep. The sole of Gandarep's foot was also seized by me, and the skin *was* flayed off up to *his* head, and with it the hands and feet of Gandarep *were* bound . . . and Gandarep *was* taken and slain by me . . . Grant *me*, O Auharmazd! heaven *or* the supreme heaven! for I have slain the highwaymen who were so big in body that, when they were walking, people considered in this *way*, that 'below them are the stars and moon, and below them moves the sun *at* dawn, and the water of the sea reaches up to their knees.' And I reached up to their legs, and they were smitten on the legs by me; they fell, and the hills on the earth were shattered by them." Keresáspa went on to tell how the demons urged on the wind to attack him, how it came on in its strength, uprooting every shrub, and tree, and reducing earth to powder in its path, and how he withstood it and prevailed. He finally pleaded that when, in the fulness of time, Zahhák shall escape from the fetters wherewith Farídún bound him to Mount Damáwand, and threaten the world with destruction, he (Keresáspa) alone can conquer and finally destroy that evil spirit. Urmuzd, in consideration for the outraged spirit of fire, long remained obdurate to the pleadings of Keresáspa, though supported by those of Zoroaster himself and others, but finally yielded, and Keresáspa was admitted into heaven.[1]

With regard to the final destruction of Zahhák by Keresáspa we find information in the Bundahish and in the Bahman Yast. Combining the accounts given, we learn that Keresáspa obtained immortality while on earth, but that owing to his slighting fire-worship he was wounded by a Turk named Nihávand, and fell asleep in the valley of Pishín in Kábulistán. He is there watched over by the divine glory, and by the guardian spirits of the righteous till the epoch when the powers of evil shall rally for the last great struggle against good, and Áhriman summon Zahhák from Mount Damáwand. Zahhák will rush forth freed from the fetters of Farídún, first apparently swallow Áhriman himself, and then a third of mankind, cattle, sheep, and other creatures of Urmuzd, smite the water, fire, and vegetation, and commit grievous sin. Then the water, the fire, and vegetation will lament before Urmuzd and pray that Farídún may be revived to slay Zahhák, else fire declares that it will not heat, and water that it will not flow. Then Urmuzd will bid Surúsh and another angel to rouse Keresáspa the Sáman. They will go to him and call him thrice.

[1] WPT, ii. 369–382.

At the fourth summons he will wake and go forth to encounter Zahhák, smite him on the head with the famous club, and slay him. All evil, sin, and misery will cease, and the era of eternal happiness begin.[1]

In the Sháhnáma, Thrita, Áthwya, Thraétaona, and Sáma Keresáspa Narimanau reappear under changed aspects. Thrita and Thraétaona coalesce into Farídún, while Áthwya becomes Abtín, the father of Farídún. Sáma Keresáspa Narimanau splits up into several personalities—Sám, the grandfather, and Narímán, the great grandfather, of Rustam, Garshásp, a more remote ancestor of his, perhaps Garshásp, the hero mentioned in the present reign, and possibly Garshásp, the tenth Sháh. In the case of Sám and Narímán the epithets and patronymics of earlier times become the names of heroes of later ages.[2]

The three sons of Farídún—Salm, Túr, and Íraj—appear in the Zandavasta as Sairima, Túra, and Airyu respectively. Firdausí seems to derive the first, of course wrongly, from the Arabic "salámat," "safety."[3] Túr may be connected with an Aryan root "tu" meaning "to swell, to grow great or strong." Íraj is the same word as Aryan and means "noble."

For the ethnical significance of the names, see Introd. p. 54.

§ 1

How Farídún ascended the Throne

When Farídún attained his wish, and reigned
Supreme on earth, he ordered crown and throne
According to the usance of old times
Within the palace of the king of kings;
And on the first of Mihr, a blesséd day,
Set on his head the royal diadem.

[1] WPT, i. 119, 233–235.

[2] For the subject-matter of the above *cf.* HEP, 277, 278; DZA, i. 225; MZA, iii. 233; WPT, ii. 369.

[3] In the oldest Pahlaví—that of the inscriptions—the letters *r* and *l* were represented by distinct signs, but in the later Pahlaví—that of the manuscripts—the same sign stood for both letters; it is easy to understand the confusion that resulted, especially in the case of proper names. See DEI, i. 19.

In those days, apprehensive of no evil,
All men began to tread the path of God,
Abstaining from contention and observing
A feast inaugurated royally.
Then sages sat rejoicing and each held
A ruby goblet, then the wine was bright,
The new Sháh's face was bright and all the world
Itself was brightened as that month began.
He bade men kindle bonfires and the people V. 63
Burned ambergris and saffron; thus he founded
Mihrgán.[1] That time of rest and festival
Began with him, and his memorial
Is still the month of Mihr. He banished then
All grief and labour from the minds of men.
He dedicated not a single day
To evil in five centuries of sway,
But yet the world remained not his. Then shun
Ambition and escape from grief, my son!
Note well that this world is no property,
And small contentment wilt thou gain thereby.
Now Farának yet knew not that her child
Had come to be the Sháh, or that Zahhák
Had lost the throne and that his power was ended.
At length news of the happy youth arrived
And of his being crowned. She bathed herself
And prostrate in God's presence offered thanks
Because of this most happy turn of fortune,
And uttered maledictions on Zahhák;
Then to all those who were in poverty
And strove to hide it she afforded aid,
But kept alike their secret and her own.
She spent a week on alms till paupers failed;
Another week she feasted all the nobles,
Bedecked her house as it had been a garden

[1] A feast held on the 16th of Mihr and the five following days.

And there received her guests. She then unlocked
The portal of her secret hoards, brought forth
The various treasures that she had amassed,
And purposed to distribute all her store.
It seemed the time to ope the treasury,
For drachms were trifles since her son was Sháh.
She made no stint of robes and royal jewels,
Arabian steeds with headstalls wrought of gold,
V. 64 Habergeons, helmets, double-headed darts,
Swords, crowns and belts. Intent upon her son
She placed her wealth on camels and despatched it
With praises on her tongue. The king of earth
Beheld, accepted it, and blessed his mother.
The leaders of the army when apprised
Sped to the monarch of the world and cried:—
"Victorious Sháh and worshipper of God,
To whom be praise! may He give praise to thee.
Thus may thy fortune grow from day to day,
Thus may the fortunes of thy foes be shent,
May heaven make thee still victorious
And mayst thou still be gracious and august."
The wise came to the Sháh from their retreats
And poured before his throne gold mixed with gems;
The nobles too from all his provinces
At that hocktide assembled at his gate,
Where all invoked God's blessing on the crown,
The throne, the diadem, and signet-ring.
With hands upstretched they prayed right heartily:—
"May such joy last, the Sháh bear fruit for ever."
As time went on he journeyed round the world,
Examining its sights and mysteries,
Marked each injustice and all wasted lands,
Bound evil hands with bonds of kindliness—
A policy that well beseemeth kings—

Bedecked the world like Paradise, and raised
Instead of grass the cypress and the rose-tree.
He reached Tammísha, passing by Ámul,[1]
And built a seat there in the famous chace:
Kús is the modern title of the place.

§ 2

How Farídún sent Jandal to Yaman

Now fifty years had passed, and by good fortune V. 65
He had three noble sons fit for the crown,
Of royal birth, as tall as cypresses,
With cheeks like spring, in all points like their father.
Two were the stainless sons of Shahrináz,
The youngest fair-cheeked Arnawáz had borne;
And though they could outpace an elephant
Their father in his love had named them not.
In time the Sháh perceived them fit to rule
And called Jandal, a noble counsellor,
In everything devoted to his lord,
And said: "Go round the world, select three maidens
Of noble lineage worthy of my sons,
In beauty fit to be affined to me
And named not by their sire for fear of talk,
Three sisters in full blood with fairy faces,
Unstained, of royal race, so much alike
In height and looks that folk can scarce discern
Betwixt them."
Having heard he undertook
The fair emprise, for he was shrewd and upright,
Of plausible address and full of tact.
He left Írán with certain of his friends
To make inquiries and receive reports.

[1] In Mázandarán.

Then when he heard of any chief with daughters
He sought to learn about them privily,
Yet could not find among the wealthy thanes
One fit to be affined to Farídún.
V. 66 This shrewd and holy man at length reached Sarv—
The monarch of Yaman—with whom he found
The object of his search—three maidens such
As Farídún required. With stately step,
As 'twere a pheasant pacing toward a rose,
He came to Sarv, and having kissed the ground
Explained his coming, praised the king and said:—
"For ever live, exalted sovereign,
Thou ceaseless lustre of the crown and throne!"
The king said: "Be thy praise in every mouth.
What is thy message? What are thy commands?
Art thou ambassador or principal?"
Jandal replied: "May every joy be thine,
And ever far from thee the hand of ill.
I come as some poor heathen to convey
A message from Írán. Great Farídún
Saluteth thee by me. Thou ask'st my business:
I answer: Mighty Farídún applaudeth thee,
And great are they whom he despiseth not.
He said: 'Say to the monarch of Yaman:—
So long as musk hath scent perfume the throne,
Be thy griefs scattered and thy wealth amassed,
And ever, king of Arabs! mayst thou be
Safeguarded by the stars from all mishap.
What thing is there more sweet than life and children?
Yea, they are sweeter than all else beside,
For none is dearer than a child, that bond
Is as no other bond. If any man
Hath three eyes I possess them in my sons,
But know that they are better still than eyes
For those that look on them give thanks. What said

The sage when he defined a proper league?
'"I ne'er ally myself but with my betters."
A sage intent on good will seek his friends
Among his peers, men may be fortunate
But monarchs are not well without a host.
My realm is prosperous, I have treasure, might, V. 67
And daring, with three sons who well deserve
To reign—wise, men of knowledge and of prowess,
Without a want or wish unsatisfied.
For these three princes in domestic life
I need three consorts of a royal race,
And I have news (whereon I send in haste)
By means of mine informants that thou hast
Among the ladies that are in thy bower,
O honour-loving king! three maiden daughters
As yet unnamed, whereat my heart rejoiced,
For my three sons of course are nameless still.
'Twere surely well for us to intermingle
These precious gems of two varieties,
Three virtuous maids with three aspiring princes,
Fit joined to fit, no room for scandal there.'
Such is his message; think of thy reply."
The monarch of Yaman drooped like the jasmine
When out of water, thinking: "If these Moons
Are taken from me, and I see them not
About my couch, my day will turn to night.
No need to answer yet; I will consult
With those who share with me the consequence."
He first assigned the ambassador a lodging,
Then having closed the audience sat and pondered.
The monarch summoned from the Bedouins
Full many a chieftain well approved in war,
And made the matter manifest to all:—
"I have as only issue of my wedlock V. 68
Three Lights that are resplendent in mine eyes,

And Farídún hath sent an embassage
To spread a goodly snare before my feet;
He would deprive me of these Eyes of mine,
And I would fain consult thereon with you.
The ambassador saith thus: 'Thus saith the Sháh:—
"I have three princes who adorn my throne
And seek for favour and affinity
With thee by marriage with thy virtuous daughters."'
If I shall answer, 'Yes,' and mean it not,
'Twill be a lie; to lie is not for kings;
If I shall acquiesce in his request
My heart will be on fire, my face all tears;
And if I shall refuse my heart will feel
His vengeance—not a matter for a jest
From one who is the monarch of the world;
And travellers too have heard of what Zahhák
Hath suffered from him. Now advise me well."

The veteran valiant chiefs thus made reply:—
"We disapprove of veering to each gust.
Be Farídún however great a king
No earringed slaves are we, but say our say
And take the consequence. 'Tis ours to handle
The bridle and the lance; we make the earth
A winefat with our swords, we make the air
A reed-bed with our spears. If thy three children
Are held so dear unlock thy treasury
And shut thy lips; or, if thou wilt use craft,
But fearest Farídún, make such demands
That none shall ever hear the like again."

The king heard while the chieftains said their say,
But felt no less uncertain of his way.

§ 3

How the King of Yaman answered Jandal

At length he called the Sháh's ambassador V. 69
And spake to him at large in gracious words:—
"I am the servant of thy lord; in all
That he commandeth me will I obey.
Thus say to him: 'Exalted as thou art,
Still thy three sons are precious unto thee;
And kings esteem their own sons very precious
When they are such as ornament the throne.
I grant what thou hast said, I too have children
And judge by them; yet if the mighty Sháh
Were to require mine eyes of me, or ask
The kingdom of Yaman and desert-tribes,
It were of lesser moment than for me
To never look upon my children more;
Still if the Sháh wish this I may not walk
Save as he biddeth me, and my three children,
If so he will, shall cease to be my kin;
But when shall I behold those princely sons
Who are the lustre of thy crown and throne?
Let those blithe youths come hither and illume
My gloomy soul; to see them will rejoice
My heart, and I will contemplate their shrewdness;
Then I will give to them my three bright Eyes
According to our customs. Furthermore,
When I perceive that they are upright men,
I will join hand in hand in league with them,
And whensoe'er the Sháh would see his sons
They shall return.'"
Jandal, the sweet-voiced speaker
On hearing kissed the throne with reverence,

Then uttering praises hied him to his lord,
V. 70 To whom he told what he had said and heard.
The monarch bade his sons attend, he spake
About the mission of Jandal, and said:—
"The monarch of Yaman is king of peoples,
Sarv is a cypress throwing lengthy shadows.
He hath three daughters—pearls as yet unpierced—
Who are his crown, for he hath not a son.
Before all three of them Surúsh would kiss
The ground, I ween, if he might have such brides.
These I demanded of their sire for you
And took such order as becometh us.
Your duty now will be to go to him,
But be discreet in all things small and great.
Be complaisant but guarded therewithal,
Heed what he saith and answer courteously.
If he consulteth you advise him well.
Now hearken to my words and ye shall prosper:
Among the peoples none can equal Sarv,
For he is fluent, ardent, shrewd, and pure.
Allow him not to find you off your guard,
For wise men work with subtilty. The first day
He will assign you chief seats at a feast,
Bring forth three sun-faced maids like garths in spring,
All full of grace, of colour, and perfume,
And seat them on the throne, these Cypresses
V. 71 In height and in appearance so alike
That none could tell their order as to age.
Now of these three the youngest will walk first,
The eldest last, the other in the midst.
The king will place the youngest maid beside
The eldest youth, beside the youngest prince
The eldest maid, and pair the mid in age.
Know, for 'tis worth your while, that he will ask:—
'How range ye in respect of age these damsels?'

Reply: 'The youngest hath the highest place,
The eldest hath a place below her rank,
The mid in age is placed as she should be,
And thou hast failed in this attempt of thine.'"
The pure and high-born three paid all regard
To what their father said, and left his presence
Fulfilled with wisdom and with artifice.
How should the sons by such a father taught
Be ill advised or indiscreet in aught?

§ 4

How the Sons of Farídún went to the King of Yaman

They summoned archimages and made ready;
Their retinue was like the starry sky,
All men of name with sunlike countenances.
Sarv, hearing of their coming, decked his host
Like pheasant's plumes, and sent to welcome them V. 72
A goodly band of kinsfolk and of magnates.
As those three noble princes reached Yaman
Both men and women met them on their way,
Bestrewing saffron mixed with precious jewels
And mingling musk with wine. The horses' manes
Were drenched therewith, and underneath their feet
Gold coins were flung. A palace was prepared
Like Paradise itself; they overlaid
The bricks with gold and silver; all the hangings
Were of brocade of Rúm—a mass of wealth.
There Sarv disposed his guests and by the morn
Had put them at their ease. He brought his daughters,
As Farídún had said, out of their bowers,
Like shining moons too dazzling for the eye,
And ranged them just as Farídún foretold.

Sarv asked the eldest prince: "Which is the youngest
Of these three Stars, which is the mid in age,
And which the eldest? Thus distinguish them."
They answered as they had been taught, and so
Sewed up the eyelids of his craft, while he
And all his warriors were lost in wonder.
He saw that his inversion naught availed
And answered, "Yea," and paired the pairs aright.
The introduction ended in betrothal.
The three princesses, blushing for their father,
Went from the presence of the three young princes
In sweet confusion, blushes on their cheek
And many a word of tenderness to speak.

§ 5

How Sarv proved the Sons of Farídún by Sorcery

V. 73 Then Sarv assembled boon-companions
And passed the day with minstrels, wine, and talk,
But his three sons-in-law—the sons of Farídún—
Drank not except to him. When wine prevailed,
And sleep and rest were needed, Sarv bade set
Some couches by a fountain of rose-water,
And there the three illustrious athelings
Slept in a garden in a bower of roses,
Which scattered blossoms o'er them, but meanwhile
The sorcerer-king had thought of a device:
He left the royal pleasance and prepared
His spells. He brought a frost and mighty blast
To slay the princes; over hill and plain
It froze so sharply that the crows grew numb.
The arch-enchanter Farídún's three sons
Leapt from their couches at the grievous cold;

And by the Grace of God and their own skill,
By kingly magic and their hardihood,
Opposed the spell and kept the frost away.
Now when the sun shone o'er the mountain-tops,
Sarv, anxious to know all, approached in haste
His three exalted sons-in-law in hope
To find their cheeks like lapislazuli,
Congealed with frost, and their emprise defeated,
So that his daughters might remain to him
As his memorial; such was his hope,
But sun and moon were adverse to his wishes,
For he beheld three princes like new moons
Fresh-seated on their royal thrones, and knew
That spells had failed him and his time was lost.
He gave an audience; all the chiefs attended. V. 74
He opened and brought forth his ancient treasures,
Disclosing what had been secreted long,
And brought too and committed to their lords
Three maids sun-cheeked, like garths of Paradise
(No archimage ere planted pines like them),
With crowns and trinkets, ignorant of pain,
Unless it be a pain to plait the hair:
They were three new Moons and three warrior-kings.
He thought with bitterness: "The fault is mine,
Not Farídún's, and may I never hear
Of female issue from this royal stock;
He hath a lucky star who hath not daughters,
But he who hath them hath no star to shine."
Then to the assembled sages: "Kings may well
Wed Moons. Bear witness all! that I have given
My three Eyes to these men in lawful marriage,
To hold them dear as their own eyes are dear,
And limn them like their own lives on their hearts."

He uttered this aloud and then he bound
On many vigorous camels' lusty backs
The baggage of the brides. Yaman was bright
With gems. The daughters' litters moved in file
With parasols and riches fit for kings.
Sarv ordered everything and said farewell.
Thus did the youths set out upon their way
To Farídún with hearts alert and gay.

§ 6

How Farídún made Trial of his Sons

V. 75 When tidings that the princes had returned
Reached Farídún he went to meet them, longing,
By trial of their characters, to end
His boding fears, so changed him to a dragon—
One, thou wouldst say, no lion could escape—
Which hissed and bellowed with its jaws aflame.
As soon as he perceived his three sons near,
Like sombre mountains in a cloud of dust,
He too threw dust about and made it fly,
While earth re-echoed with his bellowings.
He rushed in fury toward his eldest son,
That prince of many virtues, who exclaimed:—
"No man of sense and wisdom thinketh good
To fight with dragons."
Then he showed his back
And fled. The father turned toward the next,
His second son, who when he saw the dragon
Strung up his bow and drew it, saying thus:—
"When fight is toward, what matter if the foe
Be roaring lion or brave cavalier?"
But when the youngest son came up he looked
Upon the dragon and cried out: "Avaunt!
Thou art a leopard: ware the lions' path!

If e'er the name of Farídún hath reached
Thine ears contend not with us, for we three
Are sons of his, and every one of us
A wielder of the mace, and warrior.
Unless thou turnest from thy waywardness
I will discrown thee of thy loathly face."
The glorious Farídún thus heard and saw,
And having proved their mettle disappeared.
He went away but came back as their sire V. 76
With all the pomp and circumstance befitting,
With kettledrums and huge fierce elephants
And bearing in his hand the ox-head mace.
The leaders of the host were at his back,
And all the world was his. The noble princes
Dismounted when they saw the Sháh, they ran
To him and kissed the ground, dazed at the din
Made by the elephants and kettledrums.
The father grasped their hands and welcomed them,
Each to his proper place. On his return
He prayed and offered up much thanks to God—
The Author of his weal and of his woe—
Then summoned his three sons and seating them
Upon the throne of majesty spake thus:—
"That loathly dragon which would scorch the world
Was your own father, who desired to prove
Your mettle, and this known returned with joy.
Now in my wisdom I have chosen fit names
For you. Thou art the eldest, be thou Salm
And have thy wish on earth—thou soughtest safety
And didst not shun to flee the monster's maw.
The rash man who despiseth elephants
Or lions—call him frantic and not brave.
My second son, who from the first showed fight,
Whose courage is more ardent than a flame,

Him name we Túr—a lion brave; not even
A mighty elephant could vanquish him.
To dare is all the virtues in his case,
For no faint heart is master of a throne.
The youngest is a man of sleight and fight,
One that can bide his time and yet be prompt.
He chose the middle course 'twixt dust and flame,
The prudent man's. Brave, young, and sensible
V. 77 He must alone be praised. Be he Íraj,
And may his end be all supremacy,
Because at first he was not choleric,
But at the time of stress his courage grew.
I open now my lips with joy to name
These Arab dames with fairy countenances."
He named the wife of Salm, Árzú;[1] the wife
Of Túr, Máh-i-Ázáda Khú; the wife
Of blest Íraj, Sahí, to whom Canopus
Was but a slave in beauty. Afterwards
He brought a catalogue embracing all
The stars within the circling sphere of heaven,
Whose aspects readers of the stars had taken,
Spread it before him and observed the fortunes
Of his illustrious sons. Salm's horoscope
Was Jupiter in Sagittarius.
Next came the horoscope of glorious Túr—
The Sun ascendant in the Lion's House—
A presage brave; but when the Sháh observed
The horoscope of blest Íraj he found
The Moon in Cancer; thus the stars revealed
A destiny of strife and woe. The Sháh
Was sorely troubled, with a deep cold sigh
Perceived that heaven loved not his bright-souled son,
And as he mused thereon he could not be
But filled with thoughts of grave anxiety.

[1] Árzú means Desire; Máh-i-Ázáda Khú, Moon of noble-nature; and Sahí, Stately.

§ 7

How Farídún divided the World among his Sons

These secrets known, the Sháh divided earth
And made three realms: he joined Rúm with the West,
Túrán with Chín, Arabia with Írán.
He first took thought for Salm and gave him Rúm V. 78
And all the West, commanding him to lead
An army thither; so Salm took the throne,
And all the West saluted him as lord.
Next Farídún assigned Túrán to Túr
To rule the Turkmans and the land of Chín,
Providing troops; Túr led his army forth,
Arrived, assumed the seat of sovereignty,
Girt up his loins and opened wide his hands.
The nobles showered upon him precious stones,
And all Túrán hailed him as king. Íraj
Came last, the sire selected all Írán
For him. This with Arabia and the throne
Of majesty and crown of chiefs he gave,
Perceiving that Íraj deserved to rule.
How all the princes, prudent, wise, and shrewd,
All-hailed him as the master of Írán!
As marchlords thus these men of noble birth
Acceded to their thrones in peace and mirth.

§ 8

How Salm grew Envious of Íraj

Much time rolled on, while fate reserved its secrets,
Till wise Sháh Farídún was worn with age
And strewed with dust the Garden of his Spring.

This is the common lot of all mankind—
Man's strength is weakness when he groweth old.
Then gloom began to gather in the state,
The princes of the realm waxed turbulent.
Immersed in greed Salm changed in heart and mind.
V. 79 He sat in conclave, for he much misliked
His sire's apportionment, which gave Íraj
The throne of gold. In rancour and with frowns
He hurried off a camel-post, an envoy,
To give this message to the king of Chín:—
"Live ever glad and happy! Know, great king
Of Turkmans and of Chín! that our shrewd hearts
Did ill to acquiesce when we were wronged:
Though we are cypress-tall our souls are base.
Mark with discerning heart this tale of mine;
None such hath reached thee from the days of old:—
Three sons were we who graced our father's throne,
And now the youngest hath the chiefest place!
Since I am first in wisdom and in years
Such fortune doth befit my signet-ring,
While if crown, throne, and diadem should pass
From me, O king! should they not deck thyself?
Shall both of us continue thus aggrieved
By that injustice which our father did
In giving to Íraj Írán, Yaman,
And Araby; the West and Rúm to me;
To thee the wastes of Turkestán and Chín?
The youngest hath Írán; I cannot brook
This settlement; thy father must be mad."
The message filled Túr's brainless head with wind,
And savage as a lion he replied:—
"Heed well my words and tell them to thy lord:—
'It was when we were youths, O most just king!
That we were cheated by our father thus.

This is a tree which his own hands have set;
The fruit is blood, the leafage colocynth;
So let us meet and parley as to this, V. 80
Fix on our course of action and raise troops.'"
Now when the envoy brought this answer back
The face of that veiled secret was laid bare,
This brother came from Chín and that from Rúm,
And, poison being mixed with honey thus,
They met together to deliberate
The matter both in council and in state.

§ 9

How Salm and Túr sent a Message to Farídún

They chose a priest, a shrewd, bright, heedful man
And plausible, and then excluding strangers
Concerted plans. Salm put their case in words,
Washed off all filial reverence from his eyes,
And thus addressed the envoy: "Hence away,
In spite of dust and tempest, swift as wind
To Farídún and heed not aught beside.
On reaching him greet him in both our names
And say: 'In heaven and earth the fear of God
Should equally prevail, the young may hope
To see old age, but hoar hairs turn not black.
By long abiding in this straitened place
Thou straitenest the long home for thyself.
All-holy God bestowed the world upon thee
From yonder bright sun unto sombre earth,
Yet didst thou choose to act in mere caprice, V. 81
Not heeding His commands, and to entreat
Thy sons with scath and fraud instead of justice;
For thou hadst three, wise, brave, and youths no longer,

And though no excellence appeared in one
So that the others should bow down to him,
Yet one thou blastedst with a dragon's breath,
Another's head thou raisedst to the clouds;
On one thine eyes reposed with joy, and he
Now hath the crown and is beside thy couch,
While we who are as good as he by birth
Are deemed unworthy of the royal throne.
O upright judge and monarch of the world!
May justice such as this be never blessed!
If then his worthless head shall be discrowned,
Earth rescued from his sway, and thou wilt give him
Some corner of the world where he may sit
Like us in anguish and oblivion—well:
Else will we bring the Turkman cavaliers
And eager warriors of Rúm and Chín—
An army of the wielders of the mace—
In vengeance on Írán and on Íraj.'"

The priest at this harsh message kissed the ground,
Then turned and mounted swift as wind-borne flame.
When he approached the court of Farídún
And marked the cloud-capt buildings from afar,
Which stretched from range to range, while at the gate
Chiefs sat and those of highest rank behind
The curtain, on the one side pards and lions
Chained, on the other fierce war-elephants,
While from that noble band of warriors
The noise that rose was like a lion's roar,
V. 82 "It must be heaven," he thought, "and not a court:
The troops around it are a fairy host!"

The wary watchman went and told the Sháh:—
"A man of noble mien and high estate
Hath come as envoy to the Sháh."

He bade
His servants raise the curtain and bring in

The envoy, when dismounted, to the court,
Who when he saw the face of Farídún,
Saw how the Sháh engrossed all eyes and hearts,
His stature cypress-like, his face a sun,
His hair like camphor and his rose-red cheeks,
His smiling lips, his modest countenance,
And royal mouth, which uttered gracious words,
Did reverence and wore the ground with kisses.
The Sháh commanded him to rise and sit
Upon the seat of honour due to him,
Then asked him first about the noble pair:—
"Enjoy they health and happiness?" and next
About himself: "Art weary with long travel
O'er hill and plain?"
He answered: "Noble Shah!
May none behold the world without thee! Those
Of whom thou speakest are as thou wouldst wish,
And live but by thy name. Thy slave am I,
Albeit all unworthy and impure.
The message that I bring to thee is harsh
And sent in anger by no fault of mine,
But if my lord commandeth I will tell
The message sent by two imprudent youths."
The Sháh commanded him to speak and heard
The embassage delivered word by word.

§ 10

How Farídún made Answer to his Sons

When he had heard, the Sháh's brain seethed with anger.
"O man of prudence!" thus he made reply,
"Thou needest no excuse, for I have eyes V. 83
And have discerned this for myself already.

Tell mine unholy and abandoned sons—
This pair of Áhrimans with dregs of brains:—
"'Tis well that ye reveal your natures thus
And send a greeting worthy of yourselves;
For if your brains are empty of my teaching,
And ye have no idea what wisdom is,
Not fearing God, ye could not well do other.
My hair was once as black as pitch, my stature
Was cypress-tall, my face was like the moon.
The sky which hath bent down this back of mine
Is yet unfallen and revolveth still:
So time will bend you too, and even that
Which bendeth you itself will not endure.
Now by the highest name of holy God,
By yon bright sun, and by the teeming ground,
By throne, by crown, by Vénus and the moon,
I never cast an evil look upon you.
I called the sages into conference,
The archimages and astrologers;
Abundant time was spent therein that so
We might divide the earth with equity;
I had no object but to deal with fairness;
There was no knavery from first to last;
My secret motive was the fear of God,
My longing to fulfil all righteousness;
Since earth was given to me full of men
It was no wish of mine to scatter them;
I said: "On each of my three lucky Eyes
Will I bestow a populous dominion."
If Áhriman hath now seduced your hearts
From mine advice to dark and crookéd ways,
Consider if the Omnipotent will look
With approbation on this deed of yours.
V. 84 One proverb will I speak if ye will hear:—
"The crop that ye have sown that shall ye reap."

He that instructed me was wont to say:—
"Our other home is that which will endure."
But your lusts sit where reason should be throned.
Why are ye thus confederate with the Dív?
I fear that in that Dragon's clutch your bodies
And souls will part. Now that I leave the world
It is no time for wrath and bitterness;
Yet thus he saith—the man consumed with years,
Who had three sons, three men of noble birth:—
By hearts released from passions dust is held
As precious as the wealth of king of kings;
But whoso selleth brother for the dust
Men rightly say that he was bastard-born.
The world hath seen and will see men like you
In plenty; but it cottoneth to none.
Now if ye know aught of avail with God
To save you on the Day of Reckoning,
Seek that, make it the provand for the way
And be less careful for the things of earth!'"
The envoy hearing kissed the ground and went;
Thou wouldst have said: "His way-mate is the wind."
The envoy being gone the Sháh resumed
His seat, then called his noble son Íraj
And told both what had chanced and what might be:—
"Those sons of mine with hearts intent on war
Have set themselves against us from the West.
Their stars dispose them to delight in ill;
Besides their troughs are in two provinces,
Whose fruit is savagery. They will enact
The brother's part while thou shalt wear the crown,
And when thy ruddy face is pale in death
Will shun thy pillow. If thou puttest love
Before the sword thy head will ache with strife,
For from both corners of the world my sons

V. 85 Have shown their real intent. If thou wouldst fight
Make ready, ope the treasury, bind the baggage;
Secure the cup while thou art breaking fast,
For if not they will sup on thee, my son!
Thou needst not earthly helpers, thine allies
Are truth and innocence."
The good Íraj
Gazed on that loving Sháh, his glorious sire,
And said: "My lord! consider how time passeth
Like wind above us. Why should wise men fret?
It withereth the cheek of cercis-bloom,
It darkeneth the radiant spirit's eyes;
It is at first a gain and then a pain,
And when the pain is done we pass away.
Since then our couch is dust, our pillow brick,
Why plant to-day a tree whose roots will ever
Be drinking blood, whose fruit will be revenge?
The earth hath seen and will see many lords
With scimitar and throne and signet-ring
Like us; but they who wore the crown of old
Made not a habit of revenge. I too,
The king permitting, will not live in ill.
I want not crown and throne. I will approach
My brothers in all haste and unattended,
And say: 'My lords, dear as my soul and body!
Forbear your anger and abandon strife:
Strife is unlovely in religious men.
Why set your hopes so much upon this world?
How ill it used Jamshíd who passed away
At last, and lost the crown and throne and girdle!
And you and I at length must share his lot.
Live we in joy together and thus safe
V. 86 From foes.' I will convert their vengeful hearts:
What better vengeance can I take than that?"

The Sháh replied: "Thy brethren, my wise son!
Are set on fight while thou wouldst have a feast.
I cannot but recall this saw to mind:—
'It is no marvel if the moon is bright.'
An answer such as thine becometh well
Thy virtuous self; thou art for brotherhood
And love, but doth a prudent man expose
His priceless life and head to dragon's breath,
Since naught but biting venom cometh thence
By nature? Yet, if such be thy resolve,
Take order for thy going and set forth.
Select a retinue among the troops
To go with thee, and I will write a letter,
With sorrow in my heart, to those two men.
Oh! may thy safe return rejoice my sight,
For when I look on thee my soul is bright."

§ 11

How Íraj went to his Brothers

The great Sháh wrote a letter to the lord
Of all the West and to the king of Chín,
Wherein he offered first his praise to God
Who is and will be to eternity,
And then went on: "This letter of good counsel
Is for two Suns at their meridian,
Two men of weight and courage, kings of earth,
One monarch of the West, the other of Chín,
From him who hath surveyed the world throughout,
To whom mysterious things have been disclosed,
Who brandisheth the sword and massive mace,
Who addeth lustre unto famous crowns,
Who turneth into night the light of day,
Who openeth the hoards of hope and fear,

V. 87 To whom all labours have grown easy, one
In whom all splendour hath displayed itself.
I do not ask of you your diadems,
Your hoarded treasures, thrones, or palaces:
My wish is, after all my weary toils,
That my three sons should dwell in peace and love.
The brother as to whom your hearts are sore
(Though none hath felt a chilling breath from him)
Doth come in haste because of your chagrin,
And of his eagerness to see you both.
He hath resigned his kingship for your sakes—
An action worthy of the noblest men—
And taking to the saddle from the throne
Hath girt his loins that he may do you service.
Now since he is the youngest of the three
He hath a right to love and tenderness.
Hold him in honour, and repent yourselves;
As I have fed his body feed his soul,
And after he hath been with you awhile
Send my beloved one back to me."
They sealed
The letter with the signet of the Sháh.
Íraj set forth with such attendants only,
Both young and old, as were imperative;
And Salm and Túr, when he was drawing nigh,
Unwitting of their dark design, led forth
The troops to meet him as their custom was.
When they beheld their brother's face of love
They showed to him an altered countenance,
And bent on quarrel gave the peaceful one
A greeting but not such as he desired.
Two hearts were full of vengeance, one was calm:
Thus all three brothers sought their royal tents.
The troops saw, as they looked upon Íraj,
That he was worthy of the throne and crown,

And could not rest because the love of him
Possessed their hearts e'en as his face their eyes;
And when, dispersing, mate went off with mate,
Their talk in private was about Íraj:—
"This is the one to be the king of kings! V. 88
May none beside him have the crown of might."
Salm from apart was spying on the troops,
Their doings made him heavy, and he sought
His royal tent with a revengeful heart,
With liver full of blood, and frowning brows.
He had the enclosure cleared while he and Túr
Sat with their counsellors, and talked at-large
Of kingship, crown, and all the provinces;
And in the midst thereof Salm said to Túr:
"Why have the soldiers scattered into groups?
Didst thou not mark how, when we were returning,
The soldiers as they passed along the road
Could not refrain from looking at Íraj?
Our troops when they came back were altered men.
He turned my heart to gloom, thoughts thronged, I saw
That henceforth they would wish no Sháh but him.
Unless thou shalt uproot him thou wilt fall
From thine exalted throne beneath his feet."
In such a mind they closed the interview
And spent the night devising what to do.

§ 12

How Íraj was Slain by his Brothers

Now when the veil was lifted from the sun,
As morning dawned and slumber passed away,
The hearts of that insensate pair were eager
To do their deed of shame; they proudly strode
Toward their royal brother's tent. Íraj,
Who saw them coming, met them tenderly.

V. 8) They went with him inside the tent. The talk
Ran on the why and wherefore of his coming.
Túr said to him: "Since thou art youngest born
Why shouldst thou take the crown of power? Must thou
Possess the throne of princes and Írán
While I am bondslave at the Turkman's gate?
Thine eldest brother chafeth in the West
While thou art crowned and walkest over treasure,
For thus did our aspiring sire apportion
The world in favour of his youngest son."
Íraj made answer in a holier strain:—
"O mighty chieftain, lover of renown!
Seek peace if thou wouldst have thy heart at ease.
I do not want the royal crown or throne,
The style of monarch or the Íránian host;
I do not want Írán, the West, or Chín,
The kingship or the broad expanse of earth.
When majesty produceth naught but strife
One needs must weep o'er such supremacy.
Although thou ridest on the heaven above,
A brick will be thy pillow in the end.
For my part, though the master of Írán,
I am aweary both of crown and throne,
And yield to you the diadem and signet,
So hate me not; there is no feud between us,
No heart need ache through me. I will not have
The world against your will, and though I dwell
Far from your ken I ever act as younger:
My Faith is naught without humanity."
Túr heard the words and little heeded them,
But, angry that Íraj should speak and caring
No jot for peace, he rose up with a cry
And then advancing suddenly, and grasping
The massive seat of gold, he smote Íraj,

Who pleaded for his life: "Hast thou no fear
Of God, nor any reverence for thy sire? V. 90
Is this indeed thy purpose? Slay me not,
For in the end my blood will be required.
Be not thou reckoned with the murderers,
And henceforth thou shalt find no trace of me.
Canst thou approve and reconcile these twain—
To be a murderer and live thyself?
Oh! hurt not e'en the poor grain-dragging ant,
For it hath life, and sweet life is a joy.[1]
I will choose some retreat and earn my bread;
Why gird thy loins to take a brother's life?
Why set on fire our agéd father's heart?
Wouldst have the world? Thou hast it. Shed not blood:
Provoke not God, the Ruler of the world."
Túr heard him speak but answered not a word:
His heart was full, his head was vapouring.
He drew a dagger from his boot, he robed
Íraj in blood, and with the keen bright blade
Entrenched the royal breast. The lofty Cypress
Fell, the imperial girdlestead was broken,
The blood ran down that face of cercis-bloom,
And thus the young illustrious monarch died!
Túr with his dagger cut the prince's head
From the elephantine form and all was over.
O world! since thou hadst nursed him tenderly
Yet didst not spare his life at last, I wis
Not who thy secret favourites may be,
But needs must weep for such an act as this.

[1] The poet puts his own protest into the mouth of Íraj against the ancient Zoroastrian custom of killing ants at sight as being the creation of Áhriman. "The celebrated high-priest of the Parsis, the late Moola Firooz, entered these lines into his Pand Námáh,* which may betoken better days for the wise little creature." DZA, i. 171.

* *i.e.* Book of counsels.

Thou too, O man distracted and distraught,
Whose heart the world hath seared and caused to bleed!
If, as with these, revenge is in thy thought
Take warning by these persecutors' deed.
They filled the head with musk and ambergris
And sent it to the agéd world-divider
V. 91 With these words: "Look upon thy darling's head—
The inheritor of our forefathers' crown—
And give it crown or throne as pleaseth thee."
The royal and far-shadowing Tree had fallen,
And those two miscreants went their way in spleen,
Oné unto Rúm, the other unto Chín.

§ 13

How Farídún received Tidings of the Murder of Íraj

The eyes of Farídún were on the road,
Both host and crown were longing for the prince;
But when the time arrived for his return
How did the tidings reach his father first?
He had prepared the prince a turquoise throne
And added jewels to his crown. The people
Were all in readiness to welcome him
And called for wine and song and minstrelsy.
They brought out drums and stately elephants,
And put up decorations everywhere
Throughout his province. While the Sháh and troops
Were busied thus a cloud of dust appeared,
And from its midst a dromedary ridden
By one in grief who uttered bitter cries;
He bore a golden casket, and therein
The prince's head enwrapped in painted silk.
The good man came with woeful countenance
To Farídún and wailed aloud. They raised
The golden casket's lid (for every one

Believed the words of him who bore it wild)
And taking out the painted silk beheld
Within the severed head of prince Íraj.
Down from his steed fell Farídún, the troops
All rent their clothes, their looks were black, their eyes
Blanched with their horror, for the spectacle
Was other far than that they hoped to see.
Since in this wise the young king came again
The troops that went to meet him thus returned—
Their banners rent, their kettledrums reversed,
The warriors' cheeks like ebony, the tymbals
And faces of the elephants all blackened, V. 92
The prince's Arabs splashed with indigo.
Both Sháh and warriors fared alike on foot,
Their heads all dust; the paladins in anguish
Bewailed that noble man and tore their arms.
Be on thy guard as touching this world's love;
A bow is useless if it be not bent.
The process of the turning sky above
Is, favouring first, to plunder in the event.
'Twill countenance an open enemy
While those who seek its favour are denied.
One goodly counsel I address to thee:
Let no love for it in thy heart abide.
The troops heart-seared, the Sháh with cries "Alas!
Alas!" went toward the garden of Íraj
Where he delighted to hold festival
On any royal anniversary.
The monarch entered bearing his son's head,
Beheld the hauzes[1] and the cypresses,

[1] "Behind the state apartments is a beautiful and luxuriant garden, cooled by magnificent hauzes, or ornamental ponds, with stone edges, which keep the water about a foot above the level of the ground; as the water always gently overflows these edges, a sleepy murmur is produced, and the air is cooled by the large evaporating surface."—"Persia as it Is," p. 31, by C. J. Wills, M.D.

The trees a-bloom, the willows and the quinces,
Saw too and strewed dark dust upon the throne
Imperial but unprinced and lustreless
While up to Saturn rose the soldiers' wail.
He cried "Alas! Alas!" plucked out his hair,
He poured down tears, he tore his face and girt
Around his loins a rope besmirched with blood.
He fired the house wherein Íraj had dwelt,
Destroyed the rose-beds, burnt the cypress-trees
And closed up once for all the eye of joy.
He placed the prince's head upon his breast,
And said with head turned God-ward: "Righteous Judge!
Look down upon this murdered innocent,
Whose severed head is here before me now,
While foreign lions have devoured his body.
V. 93 Do Thou so burn up those two miscreants' hearts
That they may never see a bright day more.
So pierce and sear the livers of them both
That even beasts of prey shall pity them.
Oh! grant me, Thou that judgest righteously!
So long a respite from the day of death
That I may see descended from Íraj
One born to fame, and girded to avenge.
Let him behead those two injurious men
As they beheaded him who wronged them not,
And when I have beheld it let me go
Where earth shall take the measure of my height."
He wept thus many days and bitterly.
His pillow was the dust, his bed the ground
Until the herbage grew about his breast
And both those lustrous eyes of his were dimmed.
He gave no audience, but without surcease
Cried out with bitterness: "O gallant youth!
No wearer of a crown hath ever died

As thou hast died, thou famous warrior!
Thou wast beheaded by vile Áhriman;
The maw of lions was thy winding-sheet."
Wails, sobs, and cries robbed e'en the beasts of sleep,
While men and women gathered into crowds
In every province, weeping and heart-broken.
How many days they sat in their distress—
A death in life of utter hopelessness!

§ 14

How a Daughter was Born to Íraj

A while passed and the Sháh went in to view
Íraj's bower, inspected it and marked
The moon-faced beauties who resided there.
He saw a slave of lovely countenance,
Whose name was Máh Áfríd. Íraj had loved her, V. 94
And fate decreed that she should bear him fruit.
The Sháh rejoiced because she was with child,
Which gave him hope of vengeance for his son,
But when her time was come she bore a daughter,
And hope deferred hung heavy on the Sháh.
He nursed the babe with joy and tenderness,
And all the folk began to cherish her
As she increased in stature and in charms.
Thou wouldst have said to her the tulip-cheeked:—
"Thou art Íraj himself from head to foot."
When she was old enough to wed—a Pleiad
In countenance with hair as black as pitch—
Her grandsire chose Pashang to be her spouse:
Pashang was brother's son to Farídún,
Descended from a noble ancestry,
A hero of the seed of Sháh Jamshíd,
Meet for the kingship, diadem, and throne;
And in this way no little time passed on.

§ 15

The Birth of Minúchihr

Mark what a wonder yon blue vault revealed
When nine months had elapsed! That virtuous dame
Brought forth a son fit for the crown and throne,
Who from his tender mother's womb was brought
Without delay before the mighty Sháh.
The bearer said: "O master of the crown!
Let all thy heart be joy: behold Íraj!"
The world-divider's lips were full of smiles;
Thou wouldst have said: "His own Íraj doth live."
He clasped the noble child and prayed the Almighty:—
"Oh! would that I might have mine eyes again,
V. 95 That God would show to me this infant's face."
He prayed so earnestly that God vouchsafed
To give his sight back. When with open eyes
He gazed on that new-comer's face he cried:
"Be this day blest and our foes' hearts plucked out!"
He brought bright wine and splendid cups and called
That babe of open visage Minúchihr,[1]
And said: "From two pure parents there hath come
A proper branch to fruit."
He reared the babe
So tenderly that not a breath passed o'er him.
The slave that carried him upon her breast
Trod not the ground, for underneath her feet
The purest musk was strewn, and as she walked
A sunshade of brocade was o'er her head.
Years passed, no ill befell him from the stars;
Meanwhile the famous monarch taught the child
All those accomplishments that kings require.

[1] The word here translated "open visage" is "manáchihr." For the true meaning of Minúchihr see introductory note to the next reign.

When Farídún had got back sight and heart,
And all the world was talking of the boy,
His grandsire gave to him a golden throne,
A princely turquoise crown, a massive mace
And treasury-key with thrones, torques, casques, and girdles,
A bright-hued tent-enclosure of brocade
With tents of leopard-skin, such Arab steeds
With golden furniture, such Indian scimitars
With golden sheaths, such store of casques and breast-plates,
With buttoned hauberks made in Rúm and bows
From Chach and poplar shafts and shields from Chín
And double-headed javelins of war!
Thus Farídún bestowed his hard-won treasures, V. 96
Convinced that Minúchihr was well deserving,
And felt his own heart full of love for him.
He summoned all his paladins and nobles,
Who came intent on vengeance for Íraj,
And offered homage, showering emeralds
Upon his crown. On that great new-made feast
The sheep and wolf walked side by side on earth.
The leaders were Káran, the son of Káwa,
The chief Shírwí, the fierce and lion-like,
Garshásp the noble swordsman, Sám the champion,
The son of Narímán, Kubád, Kishwád,—
He of the golden helm—and many more
Illustrious men,—the safeguards of the world—
And when the work of gathering troops was done
The Sháh's head towered over every one.

§ 16

How Salm and Túr had Tidings of Minúchihr

When those two miscreants Salm and Túr had hea
"The throne of king of kings is bright again,"
They feared their star would sink and sat together
In anxious thought; those wretches' day was darkened
And they resolved to send to ask forgiveness.
They chose a man persuasive, wise, and modest,
To whom they made a passionate appeal,
And fearful of a downfall opened wide
V. 97 The treasury of the West. From that old hoard
They chose a crown of gold. They housed the elephants.
What wagons did they fill with musk and ambergris,
Brocade, dínárs, and precious furs and silks!
On high-necked elephants the embassage
Went from the West in state toward Írán.
The courtiers added tokens of regard,
And when there was as much as heart could wish
The envoy came prepared to start. The kings
Gave him this embassy to Farídún,
Invoking first of all the name of God:—
"May valiant Farídún for ever live
On whom God hath bestowed the royal Grace,
Be his head flourishing, his person loved,
His genius higher than heaven! I present
A case committed to me by two slaves
At this high portal of the king of kings.
Know that two ill-disposed and lawless men,
Whose eyes are wet with shame before their sire,
Repentant, seared at heart, and much to blame,
Now seek how best they may excuse themselves;
Till now they had no hope of being heard.

[redacted]hey say ? Their words, wise Sháh! are these:—
[redacted]that did the evil bear the brunt,
[redacted]n pain of heart and self-reproach
[redacted]; doing now, O noble Sháh !
[redacted]s it written down for us by fate
[redacted]; decree of fate the sequel came;
E'en world-consuming lions and fierce dragons
Escape not from the net of destiny.
Again—the foul Dív bade us put aside
All terror of the Worldlord from our hearts,
He took possession of two wise men's brains,
And mightily prevailed against us both;
And now our hope is that perchance the Sháh
May yet forgive us, and impute the wrong
To ignorance in us, next to high heaven
That is at once our shelter and our scath, V. 98
And thirdly to the Dív that in our midst
Is girded runner-like to work us ill.
Now, if the great king's head no longer harboureth
Revenge on us, our good faith shall be evident.
Let him send Minúchihr and, as an escort,
A mighty army to his suppliants,
With this intent that we may stand as slaves
Before him dutifully; thus our tears
May wash the tree that springeth of revenge,
Our offering shall be our tears and groans,
[redacted]nd when he groweth up our hoards and thrones.'"

§ 17

How Farídún received his Sons' Message

[redacted]ged with these words, and doubting what would
[redacted]follow,
[redacted]envoy reached the portal of the Sháh
[redacted] treasures of all kinds on elephants.

When Farídún was told he gave command
To spread brocade of Rúm upon the throne
Of king of kings and have the royal crown
Prepared, then took his seat as he had been
An upright cypress 'neath a full-orbed moon
In fitting state with crown and torque and
rings.
Blest Minúchihr sat by him crowned, the nobles
Stood ranked in double file in robes of gold,
With golden mace and girdle, making earth
Another sun. On one side pards and lions
Were chained, on the other huge war-elephants.
Then from the palace issued bold Shápúr
To introduce Salm's envoy, who on seeing
The palace-gate alighted and ran forward.
V. 99 As soon as he drew near to Farídún
And saw the diadem and lofty throne,
He bent until his visage touched the ground.
The noble Sháh, the monarch of the world,
Bade him be seated on a golden seat.
He did obeisance to the Sháh and said:—
"O glory of the crown and throne and signet!
Thy throne's steps make the earth a rosary,
And thy fair fortune brighteneth the age.
We serve the dust that is beneath thy feet
And only live since thou wilt have it so."
These praises caused the Sháh's face to relax,
Whereat the envoy spake of clemency
With great craft, and the Sháh gave ear to him
While he repeated those two murderers' words,
Endeavouring to keep the truth concealed
And make excuses for their wickedness,
Inviting Minúchihr to visit them
When they would wait upon him as his slaves,
Give him the crown and throne of majesty

And purchase back from him Íraj's blood
With wealth, brocade, dínárs, and jewelry.
The monarch heard the speech and answered it;
Like key to lock so did the answer fit.

§ 18

How Faríd́n made Answer to his Sons

The Sháh, when he had heard the message sent
By his two wicked sons, said to the envoy:—
"Canst thou conceal the sun, and clearer still
Are shown the secrets of those miscreants' hearts?
I have heard all thy words; now mark mine answer.
Tell those two shameless and unholy men, V. 100
Unrighteous, ill-affectioned, and impure,
That their vain words avail them not, and I
Have also something that I fain would say:—
'If thus your love for Minúchihr hath grown
Where is the body of his famous sire—
Íraj? The maw of wild beasts hideth it,
His head is in a narrow casket laid,
And they who made a riddance of Íraj
Now seek to shed the blood of Minúchihr!
Ye shall not see his face but with an army
And with a casque of steel upon his head,
With mace and Káwian standard while the earth
Is darkened by his horses' trampling hoofs;
With leaders like Káran, who loveth fight,
Shápúr—the valiant backbone of the host—
And by his side Shídúsh the warrior,
Shírwí the lion-strong as pioneer,
King Talímán, and Sarv, king of Yaman,
To head the forces and direct the war;
And we will drench with blood, both leaf and fruit,
The tree sprung out of vengeance for Íraj.

No one hath sought revenge for him as yet
Because I saw the back of fortune bent:
It seemed not good to me to lay my hands
In battle on mine own two sons; but now
From that same Tree which enemies have felled
A fruitful Offshoot hath sprung up; for like
An angry lion Minúchihr shall come,
With loins girt ready to avenge his sire,
Together with the leaders of the troops—
Such chiefs as Sám the son of Narímán,
Garshásp, son of Jamshíd—and hosts to reach
From hill to hill, and trample down the world.'
Next for their pleading that 'the Sháh must wash
His heart from vengeance, and forgive our crime,
Because the sky so turned o'er us that wisdom
Was troubled, and affection's seat obscured:'
I have heard all the unavailing plea,
And now that patience is fordone I answer:—
'No man that soweth seed of violence
Shall see good-days or jocund Paradise.
V. 101 If ye are pardoned by All-holy God
What need ye fear about a brother's blood?
The wise esteem the self-excuser guilty.
Revere ye not the glorious Lord of all?
Your hearts are black, your tongues speak glozing words;
He will requite you for it in both worlds.
And thirdly, since ye sent an ivory throne
And torquoise crown on mighty elephants,
With purses full of divers-coloured gems,
Am I to balk revenge, to wash away
The blood and sell the prince's head for gold?
Nay! perish first throne, diadem, and Grace!
Worse than a dragon's offspring is the man
Who taketh money for a priceless head.

Shall any say: "The sire in his old age
Is putting price upon his son's dear life?"
As for these gifts of yours—I need them not.
But wherefore utter I so many words?
Your hoary-headed sire will not ungird
The loins of his revenge while life endureth.'
Thy message have I heard. Hear my reply,
Retain it every whit and get thee gone."
The messenger grew pale at this dread speech
And at the bearing of prince Minúchihr,
Leapt up in fear and mounted instantly.
The noble, youthful envoy shrewdly saw:—
"Revolving heaven in no long time will furrow
The visages of Túr and Salm."
He sped
Like rushing wind, his head full of the message,
His heart of bodings. When he saw the West,
With camp-enclosures stretched upon the plain,
He made his way toward Salm's pavilion
Of painted silk with other tents around, V. 102
Where sat both kings in conclave. Word was passed:—
"The envoy hath returned."
The chamberlain
Approached and took him to the royal presence.
They had a special seat prepared for him
And asked for tidings of the new-made Sháh,
Of crown and throne and of Sháh Farídún,
His host, his warriors, and his dominions,
And of the aspect of the turning sky:—
"What favour showeth it to Minúchihr?
Who are the nobles? Who is minister?
What treasures have they? Who hath charge thereof?"
The envoy said: "The portal of the Sháh
Beholdeth that which bright spring seeth not,

For 'tis the jocund Spring of Paradise
Where ground is ambergris and bricks are gold.
The roof above his palace is a heaven,
And Paradise is in his smiling face.
When I approached his lofty residence
Its roof was telling secrets to the stars.
On this hand there were lions, and on that
Were elephants. The world itself was placed
Beneath his throne. Upon his elephants
Were seats of gold, and round the lions' necks
Were jewelled torques. The tymbal-players stood
Before the elephants while trumpets blared.
Thou wouldst have said: 'The precincts seethe, earth shouteth
To heaven.' I came before that well-loved Sháh,
And saw a lofty turquoise throne where sat
V. 103 A monarch like a moon. Upon his head
He wore a sparkling ruby coronet.
His hair was white as camphor, and his cheeks
Were like the petals of the rose. His heart
Is full of clemency, his speech is kind;
He is the hope and fear of all the world.
Thou wouldst have said: 'Jamshíd doth live again.'
A Shoot from that tall Cypress—Minúchihr,
Like Tahmúras, the Binder of the Dív,
Sat on the Sháh's right hand: thou wouldst have said:—
'He is the heart and soul of that great Sháh.'
There Káwa stood, the skilled among the smiths,
With one before him well beseen in war—
His son, Káran by name, the warrior,
The watchful chief, the conqueror of hosts;
The minister—Sarv, monarch of Yaman,
The treasurer—victorious Garshásp,
Were there. The sum within the treasuries
Appeareth not. None ever saw such greatness.

Around the palace were two lines of troops
With golden maces and with golden helms.
Before them there were leaders like Káran,
The son of Káwa, that experienced captain,
And warriors—ravening Lions like Shírwí,
And bold Shápúr, the elephantine chief.
When on the elephants they bind the drums V. 104
The air becometh ebon with the dust.
If these men come to fight us hill and plain
Will be confounded; these men have revenge
At heart; their faces frown; they purpose war."
The envoy having further told the message
Of Farídún, those tyrants' hearts grew sore,
Their faces blue as lapislazuli.
They sat consulting, but had naught determined
When Túr spake thus: "Farewell to peace and joy!
We must not let this hardy lion's whelp
Grow bold and sharp of fang. Will such a youth
Lack prowess, being taught by Farídún?
When grandson communeth with grandsire thus
Some devilry is sure to come of it.
Prepare we then for war and that with speed."
They hurried out their cavalry and mustered
Troops from the West and Chín, whence hubbub rose
And all flocked to the kings—a multitude
Whose star of fortune was no longer young.
Two hosts empanoplied marched on Írán
With mighty elephants, much precious store,
And those two murderers intent on war.

§ 19

How Farídún sent Minúchihr to fight Túr and Salm

The Sháh was told, "A host hath crossed Jíhún,"
And bade prince Minúchihr to pass the frontier

V. 105 Toward the desert, thus advising him:—
"A youth predestined to be fortunate
May happen to ensnare a mountain-sheep
While hunters are before and pards behind;
But having patience, prudence, sense, and wits,
He will take savage lions in his toils,
And now my foes in these my closing days
I would chastise, and wield a sword of fire."
"Great Sháh!" said Minúchihr, "may fate keep ill
For any foe that cometh to attack thee;
May he betray himself both soul and body.
Lo! I will don a coat of Rúman mail
To leave no part exposed, and then in quest
Of vengeance on the battlefield will send
The dust of yon host sunward. None of them
Hold I a man: dare they contend with me?"
He ordered that Káran, who loved the fray,
Should cross the frontier to the desert, taking
The camp-enclosure and the imperial standard.
Then as troop followed troop the hills and plains
Heaved like the sea, the day was dark with dust,
And thou hadst said: "The sun is azure-dim."
A clamour rose enough to deafen ears
Though keen, the neighing of the Arab steeds
Rose high above the tymbals' din. Two lines
Of mighty elephants stretched from the camp
For two miles, sixty carried seats of gold
Inlaid with gems, three hundred bore the baggage,
V. 106 Three hundred were in iron panoply
That hid all but their eyes.
They left Tammísha
And bore the camp-enclosure to the waste.
Káran the avenger was the general,
The host three hundred thousand cavaliers.
The men of name marched mailed, with massive maces,

All bold as angry lions and all girded
For vengeance for Íraj; their steel-blue swords
Were in their hands and Káwa's standard led them.
Then Minúchihr with him who loved the fray,[1]
Káran, went from the forest of Nárwan,
Reviewed and ranged his host on those broad plains.
He gave the army's left wing to Garshásp;
Upon the right was brave Sám with Kubád,
Who set the battle in array. The prince
With Sarv was in the centre, whence he shone
Moon-like, or as the sun o'er some high hill.
Led by Káran, with champions such as Sám,
The Íránian army fought. Kubád was scout,
The heroes of the house of Talímán
Were ambuscaders, and the host was decked
In bridal trim with lion-warriors
And din of drums.

Men bore the news in haste
To Túr and Salm: "The Íránians armed for fight
Are marching toward the desert from the forest,
Their livers' blood afoam upon their lips."

That pair of murderers with a huge array
Set forth intent on vengeance and drew up
Their host upon the plain: they made the Aláns
And sea their base. Kubád the scout advanced,
And Túr on hearing that came forth like wind,
And said to him: "Return to Minúchihr
And say to him: 'Thou bastard just made Sháh!
What though there was a daughter to Íraj, V. 107
Hast thou a right to signet, crown, and throne?'"[2]

"Yea, I will take thy message," said Kubád,
"In thine own words and style, but thou wilt quake
To think hereafter of this monstrous speech.
'Twill not be strange if even savage beasts

[1] Reading with C.

[2] Cf. DEI, ii. 217.

Bewail you day and night, for from Nárwan
To Chín are warlike, vengeful cavaliers.
A glimpse of our bright swords and Káwa's standard
Will make your hearts and brains burst in dismay:
Ye will not know a valley from a hill."
Túr heard and turned away in silent dudgeon,
While blest Kubád went back to Minúchihr
And told the insulting words. The young prince laughed.
"None but a fool," he said, "would talk like this.
But praise to Him—the Lord of both the worlds—
Who knoweth all things secret or revealed!
He knoweth that my grandsire was Íraj,
As blessed Farídún assureth me,
But when I show my person in the fight
My birth and prowess will approve themselves.
Now by the Grace of Him who ruleth sun
And moon I will not leave Túr power to wink,
But show his trunkless head to all the host;
I will avenge my blesséd sire upon him
And turn his kingdom upside down."
He ceased
And issued orders to prepare a feast.

§ 20

How Minúchihr attacked the Host of Túr

108 When the bright world grew dark and scouts dispersed
About the plain, Káran the warrior
And Sarv the counsellor, who led the host,
Observed: "This will be Áhriman's own fight,
A day of martial deeds and vengeance-seeking." [1]
A proclamation issued to the troops:—
"O men of name and Lions of the Sháh!

[1] Reading with C.

Gird up your loins, be vigilant, and may
The Almighty guard you. Whosoe'er is slain
Will go to Paradise washed clean from sin;
While they who shed the blood of warriors
Of Rúm and Chín, and take their lands, shall have
Eternal fame, the Grace of archimages;
The Sháh will give them thrones and diadems,
Their chieftain gold and God prosperity.
Now when the dawn is breaking and the sun
Half risen gird upon your valiant loins
Your maces and your daggers of Kábul,
Take up your stations and preserve your ranks."
The captains of the host, the valiant chiefs,
Drew up before the lion-prince and said:—
"We are but slaves and live to serve the Sháh,
Will do his will and with our swords make earth
Run like Jíhún."
They went back to their tents, V. 109
All purposing revenge.
Now when day broke,
Upheaving night's mid gloom, the prince assumed
His station at the centre of the host
With coat of armour, sword, and Rúman helm.
The soldiers shouted lifting to the clouds
Their spears. He duly ordered all the troops,
The left, the right, the centre, and the wings.
With heads all anger and with brows all frowns
They rolled up earth in marching. It resembled
A ship upon the waves and thou hadst said:—
"It sinketh fast!" From his huge elephant
He dropped a ball, earth heaved like azure sea,
The drummers marched before the elephants
With roar and din like lions in their rage,
While from the sounds of pipe and clarion
Thou wouldst have said: "It is a festival."

The troops moved mountain-like and both hosts shouted.
Anon the plain ran blood: thou wouldst have said
That tulips sprang up. Mighty elephants
Stood as on coral columns in the gore.
V. 110 They fought till night, till Minúchihr, who won
The love of all, obtained the victory;
V. 111 Yet fortune in one stay abideth not,
Now honey and now gall make up man's lot.
The hearts of Túr and Salm were deeply moved
By grief. They listened for a night-surprise,
But no one came e'en when night turned to day,
And they themselves were anxious for delay.

§ 21

How Túr was Slain by the Hand of Minúchihr

Noon passed. With vengeful hearts the brothers met
For consultation; mid their foolish schemes
They said: "Let us attempt a night-attack
And fill the desert and the plain with blood."
That night those miscreants drew their army out,
Bent on a camisade. The Íránian scouts
Gat news thereof, and sped to Minúchihr
To tell him so that he might post his troops.
V. 112 That shrewd man heard and planned a counter-ruse.
He left Káran the host and led himself
An ambuscade with thirty thousand warriors,
All men of name. Túr came at night and brought
One hundred thousand men prepared for fight,
But found the foe arrayed with banners flying
And saw that battle was his sole resource.
A shout rose from the centres of the hosts,
The horsemen made the air a cloud of dust
And steel swords flashed like lightning: thou hadst said:—

"They make air blaze, earth gleam like diamonds."
The clashing of the steel went through the brain,
While flame and blast rose cloudward. Minúchihr
Sprang from his ambush and surrounded Túr,
Who wheeled and fled mid wailings of despair V. 113
From his own troops. Prince Minúchihr pursued,
Hot for revenge, and cried: "Stay, miscreant,
Who lovest fight so well and cuttest off
The heads of innocents! Know'st not that all
Desire revenge on thee?"
He hurled a dart
Against Túr's back, whose sword fell from his grasp.
Then Minúchihr like wind unseated him,
Cast him to earth, slew him, cut off his head,
And left the body for the beasts of prey;
Then went back to his camp to contemplate
That symbol of a fall from high estate.

§ 22

How Minúchihr wrote to Announce his Victory to Farídún

Then Minúchihr wrote to Sháh Farídún
About the war—its fortunes good and ill—
And first he spake of Him who made the world—
The Lord of goodness, purity, and justice:—
"Praise to the Worldlord who hath succoured us!
Men find no other helper in their straits.
He is the Guide, he maketh hearts rejoice V. 114
And changeth not throughout eternity.
Next, praises be to noble Farídún—
The lord of crown and mace, possessed of justice,
The Faith and Grace, crown and imperial throne.
His fortune is the source of righteousness,
His throne of beauty and of excellence.

By virtue of thy Grace I reached Túrán,
Arrayed the host and fought by day and night
Thrice fiercely in two days. I heard that Túr
Designed a night-attack and wanting power
Relied on craft; so I arranged an ambush
And left him nothing but the wind to clutch.
He fled, I followed, and o'ertaking him
Pierced through his armour with a javelin,
And took him from his saddle like the wind.
I flung him as I would a serpent down
And from his worthless body smote the head,
Which lo! I send my grandsire, and forthwith
Will set about a stratagem for Salm.
Since Túr had placed within a golden casket
His royal brother's head in foul contempt,
And had no ruth or reverence for him, God,
Who made the world, delivered Túr to me,
V. 115 And I have slain him as he slew Íraj;
And will lay waste his realm and dwelling-place."
The letter done he sent a cameleer,
Who sped like wind with cheeks suffused with shame
And hot tears in his eyes for Farídún;
How should he like to be the carrier
Of Túr's head to the monarch of Írán?
Though dead sons were perverse their fathers mourn them;
But as the crime was great and unprovoked,
And as the avenger was both young and brave,
The messenger approached with confidence
And laid the head of Túr before the Sháh,
Who prayed to God, the righteous Judge, to pour
On Minúchihr his blessings evermore.

§ 23

How Káran took the Castle of the Aláns

News of the fight and of that Moon's eclipse
Reached Salm, who purposed making a retreat
Upon a lofty castle in his rear;
Such are the ups and downs which fortune hath!
Now Minúchihr had thought of this and said:—
"If Salm declineth battle his retreat
Will be upon the hold of the Aláns, V. 116
And therefore we must occupy the road,
For if he hath the fortress of the sea
No one will wrench him from his foothold there.
It is a place whose head is in the clouds,
'Twas built by cunning from the ocean's depths,
Is furnished well with treasures manifold
And overshadowed by the eagle's wing.
I must make haste to execute my plan
And ply both rein and stirrup."
This he told
Káran, who, as he knew, would keep the secret.
That chief replied: "O gracious sovereign!
If to the least of all his warriors
The Sháh vouchsafeth to entrust a host,
I will secure Salm's only gate for combat
Or for retreat. For this exploit I need
Túr's royal standard and his signet-ring,
Then will I make a shift to seize the hold
And go to-night; but keep the matter close."
He chose six thousand veterans of name,
Who when the sky grew ebon placed the drums
Upon the elephants, and full of fight
Set forward toward the sea. Káran resigned
The army to Shírwí and said: "I go

V. 117 Disguised as envoy to the castellan
To show to him the signet-ring of Túr.
When I am in the castle I will raise
The standard, and will make the blue swords gleam.
Approach ye then the hold, and when I shout
Make onset and lay on."
He left the host
Hard by the hold while he himself advanced,
And when he reached the castle told his tale,
Showed to the castellan Túr's signet-ring
And said: "I come from Túr, who bade me not
Stop to draw breath, and said: 'Go to the castellan
And say to him: "Be watchful day and night,
Share both in weal and woe, guard well the castle,
Be vigilant, and if Sháh Minúchihr
Shall send his troops and standard 'gainst the hold
Assist each other, and put forth your strength;
And may ye overthrow the enemy."'"
The castellan heard this and recognised
The signet-ring; they oped the castle-gates:
He saw the seeming, but he saw no more.
Mark here the rustic poet's moralising:—
"No one but He alone who placed the heart
Within can see its secrets. Be our part
To labour at the duty of the day;
So be the good and evil what they may,
Mine only duty is to say my say."
The castellan re-entered with Káran,
Who loved the fight, the guileless with the guileful.
This chieftain, though prepared for stratagems,
Sealed friendship with a stranger, and in folly
Gave both his head and castle to the winds.
He thus addressed his son—a warrior-pard:—
"My son, who art so skilful and adroit!
V. 118 Do nothing rashly and in ignorance,

But ponder well and mark from first to last
The honied words of one that is a stranger,
Especially in times of war and strife.
Search well and live in dread of ambuscades,
Look deeply whatsoe'er the matter be,
And how a chieftain shrewd of intellect,
By leaving some small detail unexplored,
And not considering the foemen's craft,
May render up his fortress to the winds."
At break of day Káran, who loved the fight,
Set up a standard like the moon full-orbed;
He shouted and made signals to Shírwí
And his exalted chiefs. Shírwí perceiving
The royal standard made toward the hold,
Seized on the gate, threw in his troops and crowned
The chiefs with blood. Here was Káran and there
Shírwí, the sword above, the sea below.
By noon the castle's form and castellan's
Had vanished. Thou couldst see a cloud of smoke,
But ship and castle were invisible.
Fire blazed, wind blew, rose horsemen's shouts and cries
For help. At sunset hold and plain were level,
And twice six thousand of the foe were slain.
A pitchy reek rose o'er a pitchy shore
And all the surface of the waste ran gore.

§ 24

How Kákwí, the Grandson of Zahhák, attacked the Íránians

Káran returned and told the prince, who said:— V. 119
"May horse and mace and saddle ne'er lack thee.
When thou hadst gone another host approached,
Led by a young and battle-loving chief,

A grandson of Zahhák, and called, I hear,
Kákwí—an infidel—with haughty horsemen
And men of name a hundred thousand strong,
And slaughtered many of our lion-warriors.
Salm now is bent on fight since this ally
Hath come to help him from Gang-i-Dizhhukht.[1]
They tell me that he is a warlike dív,
In battle unappalled and strong of hand.
I have not reached him in the combat yet,
Nor ta'en his measure with the warriors' mace,
But when he cometh next to fight with us
I will essay him and will try his weight."
Káran replied: "O prince! who can confront thee
In battle? If he were a pard his skin
Would burst upon him at the thought of fight.
Who is Kákwí? What is Kákwí? Thy foes
Will never play the man. I will devise
A shrewd device in this emergency
That none like vile Kákwí may ever come
Henceforth to fight us from Gang-i-Dizhhukht."
V. 120 The noble prince replied: "Be not concerned.
Thou art exhausted with thy late exploit,
Thy marching and revenge; it is my turn
To do the fighting: breathe awhile, great chief!"
The din of trump and pipe arose without,
The tymbals sounded and the horsemen's dust
Made air pitch-black and earth like ebony.
Thou wouldst have said: "These Diamonds have life,
These maces and these javelins have tongues!"
Shouts rose around and arrows fledged the air
Like vulture's wings, blood grouted hand to hilt
And spurted from the murk; thou wouldst have said:—
"The earth will rise in waves and whelm the sky."

[1] Zahhák's old capital.

Kákwí the chieftain raised the battle-shout
And came forth like a dív, while Minúchihr
Advanced with Indian sword in hand. Both raised
A cry that rent the hills and frayed the hosts.
Thou wouldst have said: "These chiefs are elephants,
Both terrible, both girt, both bent on vengeance."
Kákwí thrust at the girdle of the prince,
Whose Rúman helmet shook: his mail was rent
Down to the belt so that his waist appeared.
The prince's falchion struck Kákwí's cuirass V. 121
And clove it by the neck, and thus they fought
Till noon like pards and puddled earth with blood.
As day declined the prince, sufficed with fight,
Reached out and gripping firmly with his legs
Caught with all ease the girdle of Kákwí,
Dragged from his steed his elephantine form,
Flung him upon the burning sand and gashed
His chest and bosom with the scimitar.
Thus went that Arab to the winds a prey;
His mother bare him for so ill a day!

§ 25

How Salm fled and was Slain by the Hand of Minúchihr

Kákwí being dead, the master of the West,
Whose stay was broken, ceased to seek revenge
And sought to gain his stronghold in his flight,
But when he reached the sea saw not a spar
Of any vessel there. The Íránian host,
Though clogged by killed and wounded on the plain,
Pursued apace, while Minúchihr, all wrath
And vengeance, cast his fleet white charger's mail
And pressed on till within the foemen's dust
And hard upon the king of Rúm he cried:—

"Thou who art guilty of the blackest crime,
V. 122 Who murderedst thy brother for his crown!
Hast thou obtained it? Whither wilt thou flee?
I bring thee now, O king! a crown and throne:
The royal Tree hath come to bearing fruit.
Fly not the throne of greatness! Farídún
Hath got a new throne ready for thine use.
The tree which thou hast planted beareth now,
And thy breast shall receive the produce of it;
If thorns, the tree was planted by thyself;
If painted silk, the weaving was thine own."
As thus he spake he urged his steed along
And in another moment overtook
And clave the king asunder from the neck,
Then bade the head be set upon a spear,
While all admired his might and warlike arm.
Salm's troops were scattered like a flock by snow
And wandered aimlessly in companies
Amid the wastes, the caverns, and the hills.
They bade one wary, wise, and eloquent
To go to Minúchihr forthwith and say
On their behalf: "We are thy subjects all
And only tread the earth to do thy will.
Among us there are some possessed of herds,
And some of tilth and pálaces. To fight
Was not our interest but our king's command;
We came as soldiers, not to seek revenge.
We are the Sháh's sláves now and bow our heads
To do his will and pleasure. If he willeth
V. 123 Revenge and bloodshed we can but submit.
We all are guiltless and we all come in,
So let him do as seemeth good to him,
For he is master of our guiltless lives."
Thus spake the sage, the chief in wonder answered:—
"I cast my passions and exalt my name.

What is not God's is Áhriman's and evil;
Be all such banished from my sight, and may
The dívs be punished for their sins. Ye all
Are either foes or friends and mine allies,
But innocent and guilty both are spared
Since God hath given us victory. 'Tis the day
Of justice, wrong hath ceased, the leaders' heads
Are safe from falling now. Seek brotherhood
And use it for a charm, put off from you
The implements of war, be wise and pure
In Faith, secure from ill, and banish vengeance.
Now in your dwellings wheresoe'er they be,
In Chín, Túrán, or in the land of Rúm,
Let all the virtues form your pedestal
And be your homes those of enlightened minds."
The great chiefs praised that noble, upright prince,
And proclamation issued from his tent:—
"Ye paladins whose counsel prospereth!
Shed no more needless blood, the tyrants' fortunes
Are overthrown."
Then all the troops of Chín V. 124
Fell prostrate, brought their arms and gear of war
To Minúchihr, and as they passed him piled
A mountain of horse-armour, helms, and breastplates,
Of maces and of Indian scimitars,
While Minúchihr the chieftain graciously
Entreated each one as his rank might be.

§ 26

How the Head of Salm was sent to Faríd́n

The hero called a courier, gave to him
The head of Salm, the monarch of the West,
And wrote to tell his grandsire of the fight
And strategy, first giving God the praise

And then the Sháh: "Praise to the conquering World-lord
From whom are virtue, power, and Grace! His blessing
Is now on Farídún, that wise, brave Sháh,
Who hath released us from the bonds of ill,
And hath the wisdom and the Grace of God.
We are avenged upon the cavaliers
Of Chín. We lay in ambush for their lives.
Strong in the Sháh with our avenging scimitars
We smote the heads off those unrighteous men,
V. 125 Who both were reeking with Íraj's blood;
We purged the surface of the earth with steel.
Lo! I am coming like the wind behind
My letter, and will tell thee all that passed."
He sent Shírwí, the aspiring veteran,
Back to the hold, and said: "Explore the booty,
Act as thou seest best, and take the Sháh
The spoil upon high-crested elephants."
He bade the drummers and the pipers fare
Forth from the royal tent, and from that hold
In Chín marched inland back to Farídún.
As he approached Tammísha on his way
His grandsire longed to look at him. The blast
Of clarions ascended from the gate,
The host began to march out. Farídún,
That man of wakeful fortune, decked the backs
Of all the elephants with turquoise thrones,
And golden litters with brocade and gems.
A world of banners, yellow, red, and blue,
Waved overhead. The host marched toward Sarí,
Like black clouds from the waters of Gílán,
With golden bridles and with golden girdles,
With silvern stirrups and with golden bucklers,
With treasures, elephants, and precious stores,
In readiness to welcome Minúchihr.

Now as that prince approached the royal host
His grandsire went afoot to welcome him,
As did the men of Gíl like lions loose,
With torques of gold and helmets black as musk.
The Íránians followed on behind the Sháh, V. 126
Each like a savage lion, troops went first,
The elephants and lions in the midst,
Behind the elephants more valiant troops.
Whenas the flag of Farídún appeared
The host of Minúchihr deployed in line.
That youthful prince, that sapling just producing
Its earliest fruits, dismounted from his steed.
He kissed the ground and blessed the monarch's throne,
His diadem and crown and signet-ring,
But Farídún commanded him to mount,
Kissed him and grasped his hand.
Then Farídún
Returning home sent word to Sám, the son
Of Narímán: "Come presently," for Sám
Had come from Hindústán to help to fight
Against the sorcerers, and brought withal
A mighty store of gold and precious things
Above whate'er the Sháh required of him—
Such myriads of jewels and dínárs
That no accountant could have reckoned them.
Sám, when he reached the monarch of the world,
Saluted both the old Sháh and the young.
The famous monarch seated Sám beside him,
The great king seated the great paladin,
And said: "I put my grandsire in thy charge,
For I must now depart. Help him in all
And make him show a prowess like thine own."
The great Sháh lightly laid the young man's hand
In that world-paladin's, looked up and said:—
"Almighty God! Just Judge who sayest sooth!

V. 127 Thou saidst: 'I am the Almighty, the just Judge,
The Help of the oppressed in their distress.'
Right hast Thou done me, Thou hast holpen me
And given me both crown and signet-ring.
God! Thou hast granted me my whole desire;
Now take me to the other world—a better
Than this—because I would not that my soul
Should tarry longer in this narrow sphere."
Shírwí the chieftain with the spoils approached
The palace of the Sháh, who lavished all
The booty on the troops.
He gave directions,
Two days ere Mihr, for Minúchihr to sit
Helmed on the throne of gold, with his own hands
Crowned the young prince, and gave his last commands.

§ 27

The Death of Farídún

This done, the great king's day and fortune changed,
The leafage withered on the royal tree;
He quitted crown and throne and with the heads
Of those three kings beside him lived in tears
And in austerities: his plaint was this:—
"My days are changed and darkened by these three,
Who were my heart's delight and grief withal,
Thus slain before me miserably, in hatred,
And as my foes would wish. Such ills befell them
Through their perversity and evil deeds;
They disobeyed me and the world frowned on them."
His heart was full, his face all tears till death.
Though Farídún is gone there is his name
Still left through all the years that have passed by;

He was, my son! all excellence and fame— V. 128
One who found profit in adversity.
Then Minúchihr put off the royal crown,
He girt a blood-stained girdle round his loins,
And reared a charnel as the Sháhs were wont
Of ruddy gold and lapislazuli.
They placed a throne of ivory within
And hung a crown above it, visited
The dead to say farewell, as was the use
And ritual, then shut the charnel-door:
In such ill case that dear one left the world!
One sennight Minúchihr gave up to grief,
His eyes were full of tears, his cheeks were pale,
And for a sennight city and bázár
Were mourning with their mourning sovereign.
O world which art all wind and levity!
The man of wisdom hath no joy of thee.
Thou fosterest each one with thy caress,
No matter if his life be more or less,
But when thou willest to revoke the trust
What reckest thou of coral or of dust?
Man! when the world hath snapped in twain the cord
Of this world for thee, be thou liege or lord,
Thy griefs and pleasures as a dream appear:
Vex not thy heart then to continue here.
Blest is the man who, whether king or thrall,
Bequeatheth good as his memorial!

VII

MINÚCHIHR

HE REIGNED ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY YEARS

ARGUMENT

After describing the accession of Minúchihr, the poet proceeds to tell the story of Zál, the son of Sám, how, being born with white hair, he was in consequence exposed by his father on Mount Alburz, how he was found and brought up by the Símurgh, how in after years he and his father became reconciled, and how he rose to greatness. The poet also tells of the loves of Zál and Rúdába, the daughter of Mihráb, the idolatrous king of Kábul, the wrath of Minúchihr thereat, his ultimate consent to the union, and the birth of Rustam, with an account of whose first adventures, and of the death of Minúchihr, the reign concludes.

NOTE

The story, which occupies the reign of Minúchihr, in whose name, which means "offspring of Manu,"[1] we can still trace a connection between Indian and Iránian mythology, between the Vedas and the Zandavasta, is perhaps the most charming in the whole poem; and here first the stream of epic, hitherto confined and cramped, breaks out into broad waters, and carries us to the heroic race who play such an important part throughout the first—the mythic—period of the poem. We have already seen how the titles bestowed on the great hero Keresáspa became separate personalities in later times,[2] and in this reign we have one of his most

[1] Manushchithra in the Zandavasta. For Manu see prefatory note to Jamshíd.

[2] See introductory note to Farídún.

famous feats recorded as an exploit of Sám, the son of Narímán—the slaying of the dragon of the Kashaf. The legend appears to have become localised in the neighbourhood of the poet's own birthplace, Tús, by which the Kashaf flows, and the dragon may be typical of the periodical floods the prevention of which is said to have been an object which the poet had at heart.[1] The feature of Sám's mace is reproduced from the earlier legend, where Keresáspa is described as "bludgeon-bearing."[2]

The gigantic mythical bird, the Símurgh, the Roc of the Arabian Nights, which plays such an important part in the legend of Zál and of his son Rustam, is described in the Bundahish as "the griffon of three natures."[3] It appears to have been conceived of as a sort of gigantic bat.[4] The Bundahish, in its account of birds, says: "There are two of them which have milk in the teat *and* suckle *their* young, the griffon bird, and the bat which flies in the night; as they say that the bat is created of three races (sardak), the race (áyina) of the dog, the bird, *and* the musk *animal;* for it flies like a bird, has many teeth like a dog, *and* is dwelling in holes like a musk-rat."[5] The Símurgh was the first bird created,[6] and its nest was on the tree of wild vegetable life which grew in the wide ocean near to the tree of immortality. Upon the former tree collect all the seeds which plants have produced during the year, and the office of the Símurgh was to shake the tree and scatter the seeds, which were then collected by another mythical bird, called Chamrosh, which had its nest on the summit of Mount Alburz and protected Írán from invasion. This bird mingled the seeds with the rains, which the good genius Tishtar (Sirius) had rescued from the demons, with a view of pouring them on the earth; the purport of the legend was to account for the rapid vegetation in hot climates.[7] The poet appears to have combined some of the characteristics of several mythical birds—the Chamrosh, the Karshipta, and also of the Vare*ng*ana or raven in his account of the Símurgh. The magical or medicinal efficacy of the raven's feathers is recognised in the Zandavasta, where we read: "Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda . . . 'If I have a curse thrown upon me, a spell told upon me by many men who hate me, what is the remedy for it?' Ahura Mazda answered: 'Take thou a feather of that bird . . . the

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[1] C, liv.

[2] MZA, iii. 234.

[3] Sih (three), áyína (kind or sort), murgh (bird)=Símurgh. WPT, i. 47, 89, 91.

[4] WPT, i. 71.

[5] *Id.* 50.

[6] *Id.* 89.

[7] *Id.* 70, and iii. 112.

Vare*ng*ana, O Spitama Zarathustra! With that feather thou shalt rub thy own body, with that feather thou shalt curse back thy enemies. If a man holds a bone of that strong bird, or a feather of that strong bird, no one can smite or turn to flight that fortunate man. The feather of that bird of birds brings him help; it brings unto him the homage of men, it maintains him in his glory."[1]

With regard to the account of the employment of anæsthetics on the occasion of the Cæsarean birth of Rustam, we find another instance of their employment by Urmuzd himself in the account of the Creation in the Bundahish. When Áhriman broke into the creation of Urmuzd and attacked the Primeval Ox, we read that Urmuzd had previously ground up healing fruits in water for it, that its death might be the less painful.[2] Similarly we read in Genesis that the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam.

The earliest reference to Rustam in literature appears to be an indirect one in the Kur'án.[3] He is also mentioned in the work that passes under the name of Moses of Chorene: "Age vero, si placet, vilia vanaque de eo mendacia declarabo, qualia Persae de Restomo Sazico memorant, quem CXX elephantis viribus fuisse superiorem tradunt. De hujus pariter robore & fortitudinem ea celebrant, quae â similitudine veri longissimê absunt, quem sanê neque Samsoni, neque Herculi, nec Sazico fabulae istae conferunt. Canunt et enim quadrata eum saxa manibus prehendere potuisse, & ad arbitrium suum, magna aeqûe ac parva, divellere, unguibûsque abradere, &, velut in tabulâ, aquilarum figuras, aliaque ejus generis effingere atque unguibus inscribere: Qui cum apud magni maris Pontici litus hostiles quasdam naves offendisset, impetum in eas fecit, quas in altum octo aut decem circiter stadia provectas, ubi consequi non potuit, globosis eas lapidibus incessit, quorum conjectu aquae, ut aiunt, tantoperê diffindebantur, ut naves non paucae demersae fuerint, & fluctuum vis, aquarum fissura altiûs surgentium reliquas naves multos mille passus propulerit. Prôh ingens fabula, aut potiùs, fabularum fabula."[4]

Malcolm identifies the castle on Mount Sipand taken by Rustam with a famous stronghold, known on account of its appearance as "the White Castle," situated in the province of Párs, about seventy-six miles north-west of Shíráz, "on a high hill that is almost perpendicular on every side. It is of oblong form, and

[1] DZA, ii. 240.
[2] WPT, i. 18.
[3] RK, p. 284. Cf. NIN, p. 10.
[4] Whiston, *Mosis Chorenensis*, 96.

encloses a level space at the top of the mountain, which is covered with delightful verdure, and watered by numerous springs. The ascent is nearly three miles ; for the last five or six hundred yards the summit is so difficult of approach that the slightest opposition, if well directed, must render it impregnable . . . In 1810 it was . . . in possession of the tribe of Mumasenni, one of the aboriginal tribes of Persia. Their means of defence were probably still the same as in the days of Roostum: a line of large stones ranged in regular order around the edges of the precipice. Each stone is wedged in by a smaller: when that is removed, the large stone, or rather rock, is hurled down, and sweeps everything before it."[1]

§ 1

How Minúchihr ascended the Throne and made an Oration

They mourned for Farídún for seven days, V. 129
Upon the eighth Sháh Minúchihr came forth
And set the royal cap upon his head;
He countercharmed the spell of sorcerers
And reigned twice sixty years. The paladins
Throughout the world called praises down on him.
When he assumed the crown he gave the world
Glad news of justice, Faith, humanity,
Of goodness, knowledge, purity, and said:—
"I sit enthroned upon the circling sphere,
Dispensing love and justice, wrath and strife.
Earth is my thrall, heaven mine ally, the heads
Of kings my quarry. Mine are Faith and Grace,
Mine to bestow good fortune and to harm.
I wreak revenge by night; the raging fire
Upon Barzín[2] am I, and lord of scimitar
And golden boot. I set up Káwa's standard
And light the clouds, I draw my sword and give
No quarter on the battlefield. My hands
Become a bounteous ocean when I feast,
But when I mount my steed my breath is fire.

[1] MHP, i. 19, and note.

[2] The name of a Fire-temple.

I cut the practice of the wicked short
And make the earth a red brocade of blood,
V. 130 I wield the mace, I illustrate the crown
And light the kingdom from mine ivory throne;
Yet in despite of all I am a slave—
A servant of the Maker of the world.
Smite we our faces with our hands and weep,
Let all our conversation be of God,
Of whom we hold the crown, the throne, and host:
We give Him praise and He is our defence.
We tread the path of Farídún the blest—
Our grandsire: he was old, but we are young.
Whoever in the seven climes of earth
Departeth from the Way, abandoneth
The Faith, inflicteth hurt on mendicants,
Oppresseth any one of his own kin,
Uplifteth in the pride of wealth his head,
Or causeth sorrow to the suffering,
All such are infidels in my regard
And worse than evil-doing Áhriman.
All evil-doers that hold not the Faith
Are banned by God and us: hereafter we
Will put our hand upon the scimitar,
And in our vengeance desolate their realm."
All men of name throughout the earth invoked
Their blessings on him with one voice, and said:—
"Thy glorious grandsire, O benignant Sháh!
Taught thee the conduct of the throne and crown.
Be ever thine the throne of mighty men,
The crown and archimages' Grace. Our hearts
Obey thy word, our souls are pledged to thee."
V. 131 Thereat rose Sám, the chief of paladins,
And said to Minúchihr: "O judge most just!
I from the Sháhs have gotten eyes to see,
And see thee just: my part is to applaud.

Sháh of Írán art thou by long descent—
The chosen of the Lions and the brave.
May God watch o'er thy body and thy soul,
Thy heart be glad, thy fortune slumber not.
Thou mindest me of days of yore and art
My place of shelter at the royal throne.
Thou art a lion steadfast in the fight,
Thou art a sun resplendent in the feast.
Be time and earth the dust upon thy feet,
Thy place upon the turquoise throne. Since thou
Hast cleansed earth with thine Indian scimitar
Sit at thine ease and take thy pleasure here.
Henceforward all the warfare is for us;
Thine are the throne, the wine-cup, and the banquet.
The fathers of my race were paladins—
The shelter of the Sháhs and of the great—
And from Garsháṣp to famous Narímán
Were chiefs and swordsmen. I will compass earth
And put a scantling of thy foes in bonds.
Thy grandsire made me paladin, thy love
And counsel made me wise."
The Sháh returned
His praise, bestowing many a kingly gift,
And then Sám with the paladins withdrew
And so departed on his homeward way,
While all the world conformed to righteous sway.

§ 2

The Birth of Zál

Now will I fashion from the legend-store
A tale of wonder from the days of yore;
Give me thine ear, my son! and learn from me
How Sám became the sport of destiny.

V. 132 Now Sám was childless and in that regard
In need of solace. One among his wives—
A Beauty rosy-cheeked with musky hair—
Gave him the hope of offspring, for that Moon
Was sun-faced, ripe, and was with child by him,
And grievously she suffered with her burden.
When many days had passed the babe was born—
A Beauty like the world-illuming sun,
And like it too in loveliness of face;
But all his hair was white, and since 'twas so
They kept the thing from Sám for one whole week:
The women of that famous paladin
Wept in the presence of the little child,
But not one dared to tell the hero Sám
That his fair spouse had borne a hoary babe.
Anon the infant's nurse, with lion's courage,
Came unabashed before the paladin,
As one who brought good news, blessed him and said:—
"May Sám the hero's days be fortunate,
And may his foemen's hearts be rooted out!
God hath bestowed on thee what thou didst ask—
The very gift whereon thy soul was set:
Behind thy curtain, seeker after glory!
Thy moon-faced spouse hath borne a stainless son,
A paladin, a child of lion-heart,
A boy of spirit, fashioned of pure silver,
And with two cheeks that favour Paradise.
Thou wilt not see a faulty part in him
Except this blemish—that his hair is white.
So heaven willed, O seeker after glory!
Content thee and be not morose and thankless."
The horseman Sám descended from his throne;
He went behind the curtain to "Young Spring,"
And saw a goodly boy with hoary head.

None hath beheld or heard of such; his hair
Resembled snow and yet his cheeks were ruddy. V. 133
Sám at that sight despaired. Great was his fear
Of coming shame; he left the path of wisdom
For courses of his own, looked up to heaven
And prayed to be forgiven his offence.
"O Thou," he said, "above all harm and loss!
Good ever cometh of Thine ordinance.
If I have sinned by any grievous sin,
Or yielded to the faith of Áhriman,
Oh! may the Almighty hearken to my prayer
And in His secret counsels pardon me.
My troubled mind is writhing for sheer shame,
The hot blood is a-tingle in my veins
For this brat like a brat of Áhriman,
With dark eyes and with hair like jessamine.
When any nobles come to speak with me,
And set their eyes on this ill-omened cub,
What shall I say that this dív's bantling is—
A fay or leopard with its spots? The great
Will laugh at me in public and in private
Till shame shall make me curse and quit Írán."
He spake in wrath with frowns and railed at fortune,
Then bade some take the child and carry it
Beyond those fields and fells and far away.
There was a certain mountain named Alburz,
Nigh to the sun and far removed from men,
Where the Símurgh had nested, for the place
Was uninhabited. They left the child
Upon the mountain and returned. Time passed,
While for no fault the infant paladin,
Unable to distinguish black from white,
Was outcast from his father's love; but He,
Who fostereth all, took up the castaway.

V. 134 Once when the lioness her cub had fed,
"If I should give thee my heart's blood," she said,
"I should not look for thanks. I live in thee;
My heart would break if thou shouldst break with me."
Throughout the expanse of earth the beasts we find
More tender to their young than are mankind.
The babe remained where thrown, exposed both day
And night. He sucked his finger-ends and wailed.
Now when the young Símurghs grew ravenous
The mother, soaring o'er her nest, beheld
Earth like a heaving sea, and wailing there
A child rock-cradled with the dust for nurse,
His body bare, his lips unwet with milk,
The dark drear soil about him and above
The noonday sun. Would that he had had pards
For dam and sire, he had at least been shaded!
The Lord gave loving instincts to that fowl,
Which thought not to devour the child herself,
But swooped down from the clouds and with her talons
Took up the infant from the heated rocks,
Then bare him quickly off to Mount Alburz,
Where were her nest and young, for them to tear
Regardless of his cries; but God, who giveth
All good, had ruth on him, his lot was other;
V. 135 For when the fowl and all her brood beheld
That infant, who was weeping tears of blood,
They lavished love on him in wondrous wise,
Astonied at his goodly face. The bird
Chose for him all the tenderest prey, and made
Her little guest suck blood instead of milk.
Long was he lost to sight; but when he came
To man's estate a caravan passed by
And saw one like a noble cypress-tree,
His breast a silver mount, his waist a reed,

And rumour of him spread, for neither good
Nor bad remaineth hid; so Sám in fine
Heard of that high-starred youth of Grace divine.

§ 3

How Sám had a Dream touching the Case of his Son

One night when Sám was sleeping, seared in heart
And overwhelmed by that which time had wrought,
He dreamed that from the land of Ind there came
A noble rider on an Arab steed
Apace, and gave him glad news of his son—
That lofty bough of his of fruitful promise.
When he awoke he called the archimages,
Conversed with them at large, told them his dream
And of the gossip of the caravans:
"What say ye," said he, "touching this affair?
Is it a fair presumption to your minds
That this child liveth, or hath winter's cold
Or summer's heat destroyed him?"
Old and young V. 136
There present answered thus the paladin:—
"Ingrates to God experience good in naught;
For pards and lions on the sands and rocks,
And fish and crocodiles in waterways,
All cherish their own little ones and give
God thanks; but thou didst break the covenant
With Him who giveth good, and cast away
An innocent because of his white hair,
Which shameth not a body pure and bright.
Say not, 'The child is dead,' but gird thyself
And ever persevere in quest of him,
Since one whom God regardeth will not die
Of heat or cold. And now in penitence

Incline to Him—the Author of all good,
The Guide."
So next day and in sore distress
Sám went to Mount Alburz, and when night came
Slept ill at ease. He saw a standard raised
Above the Indian mountains, and a youth
Of beauteous visage with a mighty host,
Upon his left an archmage, on his right
A sage of noble aspect. Of these twain
One came to Sám and said in chilling tones:—
"Audacious man and impious in thine aims!
Is there no fear of God before thine eyes?
If to thy mind a bird is nurse enough
What booteth it to be a paladin?
If white hair be a blemish in a man
Thy beard and head have grown like willow-leaves!
V. 137 God gave thee such and such things: why hast thou
By thine injustice frustrated the gift?
Abhor thy Maker then, for day by day
Thy body changeth hue. Thou didst despise
Thy son, who is the fosterling of God—
The kindliest Nurse for him. As for thyself,
Love is not in thee."
Sám roared out in sleep
As when a mighty lion is ensnared;
He feared that dream portended chastisement
From destiny. Aroused, he called to him
The men of lore and bade the chiefs to horse.
He came in haste toward the mountain-peak
To seek his castaway, and there beheld
A height whose top was midst the Pleiades:
Thou wouldst have said: "It will obstruct the stars."
Upon the top was built a lofty nest,
Where Saturn's influence could not injure it;

Tall posts of ebony and sandal-wood
Laced with lign-aloe stayed it underneath.
Sám gazed in wonder on that stony peak,
On that majestic bird and weird abode.
The building reached to Spica, and was raised
Without hand-labour, with no stones and earth.
A youth stood there—the counterpart of Sám,
Who watched him as he walked about the nest,
Then laid his cheeks upon the ground, and gave
Thanks to the Maker, in that He had made
Such bird upon the mountain, and had raised
Its stony summit to the Pleiades,
Acknowledging: "He is a righteous Judge,
All powerful and higher than the high."
He sought to find a path or any track
Whereby the wild beasts scaled the precipice;
And walked around the mountain giving thanks,
But saw no way to climb it. He exclaimed:—
"O Thou above all place, o'er sun and moon
And shining rainbow! I prostrate myself V. 138
Before Thee, pouring out my soul in awe.
If this youth springeth from my loins indeed,
Not from the seed of evil Áhriman,
Assist thy servant to ascend this height
And show me mercy, sinful as I am."
Thus prayed he to the Just: his prayer was granted.
When the Símurgh looked from the height and saw
Sám with his company, she knew that they
Came not for love of her but for the youth,
To whom she said: "Thou who hast seen the unease
Of nide and nest! I am the only nurse
That fostered thee, the source of all thy weal,
And gave to thee the name Dastán-i-Zand,[1]
Because thy sire dealt with thee treacherously;

[1] *I.e.* "much defrauded," in allusion to Sám's treatment of his son.

Command thy valiant guide to call thee so
When thou returnest home. Thy sire is Sám,
The hero, paladin of paladins,
And most exalted of the mighty men.
He hath come hither searching for his son,
And with him high estate hath come to thee.
Now must I take thee up and bear thee back
Unscathed to him."
He listened while she spake,
His eyes were filled with tears, his heart was sad.
Though he had seen no man, still he had learned
Of her to speak in accents like her own,
With much of wisdom and of ancient lore;
Thus had he language, wisdom, and right rede,
And looked to God for succour. Now observe
His answer to the fowl: "Hast thou in truth
Become aweary of my company?
Thy nest is unto me a shining throne,
Thy pinions are my glorious diadem,
V. 139 And next to God I owe my thanks to thee,
For thou hast turned my hardship into ease."
The bird replied: "If once thou dost behold
The crown, the throne, and doings of the court,
This nest will seem to thee of small account.
Make but one trial of the ways of fate.
I do not send thee hence in enmity;
I pass thee to a kingship. I would fain
Have kept thee here with me, but for thyself
To go is better. Bear this plume of mine
About with thee and so abide beneath
The shadow of my Grace. Henceforth if men
Shall hurt or, right or wrong, exclaim against thee,
Then burn the feather and behold my might,
For I have cherished thee beneath my plumes
And brought thee up among my little ones.

Now like a black cloud will I bear thee off
And carry thee to yonder spot uninjured.
Let not thy heart forget to love thy nurse,
For mine is breaking through my love of thee."
She thus consoled his heart, then took him up,
Bore him with stately motion to the clouds,
And swooping down conveyed him to his sire.
The youth had hair descending to his breast,
An elephantine form and cheeks like spring.
His father seeing him groaned bitterly,
Then quickly did obeisance to the bird,
And offered thanks and praises o'er and o'er.
"O queen of birds," he said, "the righteous Judge
Gave thee thy power and might and excellence,
That thou shouldst be the helper of the helpless,
And in thy goodness justest of the just.
May'st thou for ever make thy foes to grieve
And always be as mighty as thou 'art."
With that the bird, watched by the eyes of Sám
And all his company, soared mountainward.
He gazing on the youth from head to foot
Adjudged him fit for crown and throne; he had
A lion's breast and limbs, a sunlike face, V. 140
The heart of paladins, a hand to seek
The scimitar, white lashes but with eyes
Pitch-coloured, coral lips and blood-red cheeks.
Except his hair there was no fault at all;
None could discern in him another flaw.
Sám's heart became like Paradise; he blessed
His stainless child. "Have no hard thoughts," he said,
"Forget the past and warm thy heart with love
Toward me—the meanest of the slaves of God.
Henceforth since I have thee I swear by Him
I will not fail in gentleness to thee,

But will fulfil thy wishes good and bad:
Henceforth thy will shall be my rule of right."
He clothed the young man like a paladin
And turned to leave the mountain: having reached
The plain he chose a charger for his son,
As well as royal robes for him to wear,
And gave to him the name of Zál-i-Zar,[1]
Though the Símurgh called him at first Dastán.
Then all the troops with gladness in their hearts
Sought Sám. The drummers led on elephants,
And dust rose like a mount of indigo.
There was a sound of drums and clarions,
Of golden gongs and Indian bells, while all
The horsemen shouted. Thus they journeyed home
Until all joyfully they passed within
The city, greater by one paladin.

§ 4

How Minúchihr took Knowledge of the Case of Sám and Zál

"Sám hath returned in triumph from Alburz!"
Such tidings from Zábul came to the Sháh,
Who joyed exceedingly: the Maker's name
V. 141 Was often on his lips. He had two sons,
Both well beloved, one hight Naudar, the other
Zarasp, both brave and wise, and both endowed
With Grace and Faith, both like Ázargashasp
Upon the plain. He said: "Let famed Naudar
Go with despatch to Sám and look upon
His child that hath been nurtured in a nest,
Congratulate him on the Sháh's behalf
Upon the joy that hath revealed itself;

[1] *I.e.* "Zál the old," in allusion to his white hair.

And bid him come in person to the Sháh
To tell his tale, and afterwards depart
Home like a loyal liege."
Now when Naudar
Reached Sám the son of Narímán he saw
The new young paladin. Then Sám the horseman
Alighted, and Naudar and he embraced.
Sám asked about the Sháh and chiefs, Naudar
Delivered all their greetings. Sám, on hearing
The message of the great king, kissed the ground,
And hasted as commanded to the court.
When he drew near the Sháh went out to meet him.
Sám saw the flag of Minúchihr, dismounted
And went afoot. He kissed the ground and said:—
"For ever live glad and of ardent soul!"
But Minúchihr bade that true-hearted man,
That worshipper of God, to mount again.
They went toward the palace; Minúchihr
Sat down with great rejoicing on the throne,
And placed the royal crown upon his head.
On this side sat Káran, on that side Sám,
Both glad and well content. The chamberlain
Approached with stately step and brought in Zál,
Equipped with golden mace and golden crown. V. 142
The Sháh marked with amaze that lofty stature
And goodly face, "the abode," as thou wouldst say,
"Of life and love." He said to Sám: "Safeguard him
For my sake, never give him needless pain,
But find thy happiness in him alone,
For he hath royal Grace and lion's claws,
The wise man's heart, the prudence of the old.
Teach him our customs both in war and feast;
Bird, nest, and height he knoweth; can he know
What honour and court-usages demand?"

Then Sám told all the story to the Sháh
About the lofty mountain and Símurgh,
And how the precious one was lodged and nurtured
Within the nest till he could feed himself;
Told wherefore he had cast the child away,
And said thus: "Heaven revolved above my head
For many years; the world at length was filled
With strange reports of Zál and the Símurgh.
Commanded by the Lord of all the world
I went to Mount Alburz—no easy place—
And saw a mountain-peak among the clouds;
Thou wouldst have said: 'It is a dome of flint
Upon a sea!' The nest like some tall palace
Was there, well fenced from harm on every side,
With Zál and with the young of the Símurgh
Within it: thou hadst said:—'They are one brood.'
His breath exhaled the very scent of love,
And every thought of him rejoiced my heart.
. 143 Oft ran I round the Mount but path was none;
A yearning for my lost son came to me;
My heart burned so that life was well-nigh gone.
I prayed in secret to the holy Judge:—
'Resource of men, without a want Thyself!
Thy witness doth extend to every place,
And heaven turneth only at Thy word.
A slave am I, whose heart is full of sin
Before the Master of the sun and moon;
My hope is in Thy mercy—that alone:
I have no other ground of confidence.
This slave of Thine—the fostered of the fowl—
Brought up in misery and wretchedness,
Who hath but skins to wear instead of silk
And sucketh raw flesh, not his mother's breast—
Restore to me! Disclose for me a way
To him and cut this present trouble short.

Sear not my soul for my defect in love;
Oh! pardon me this once and cheer my heart.'
When I had spoken thus, the Lord vouchsafed
To grant my prayer immediately: the bird
Flew up, and soaring to the clouds wheeled round
Above the head of me the infidel;
Then from the mountain like a cloud in spring
Came with the form of Zál clasped to her breast,
And odours that fulfilled the world with musk.
Mine eyes were tearless, and my lips were dry;
I feared the bird and yearned upon my son,
So that my wits departed clean away.
She brought him to me like the kindliest nurse,
Whereat my tongue began to utter praise,
And strange! I did obeisance to the fowl!
She left my son and went, 'twas God's decree,
And I have brought him, lord of earth! to thee,
And told what heretofore was mystery."

§ 5

How Zál went back to Zábulistán

The Sháh then ordered the astrologers, V. 144
The archmages and the other men of lore,
To ascertain the horoscope of Zál
And so forecast the prince's destiny:—
"What will he be on reaching man's estate?
Ye must inform me as to this at large."
They found the horoscope of Zál and said:—
"This youth will be a famous paladin,
A noble, shrewd, and valiant cavalier."
The Sháh rejoiced and Sám's heart ceased from care.
The ruler of the earth prepared a gift
Of such a sort that he was blessed by all,
Of Arab steeds with golden furniture,

Of Indian scimitars with golden sheaths,
Of furs and gold, of jewels and brocade,
Of carpets also an abundant store,
Of Rúman slaveboys in brocade of Rúm
With jewelled patterns on a golden ground,
Of bowls of emerald and turquoise cups,
Of others of pure silver and red gold
Containing saffron, musk, and camphor: these
The servants brought with suits of mail and casques,
Horse-armour, lances, maces, bows and arrows,
A throne of turquoise and a crown of gold,
A ruby signet-ring and golden girdle.
Anon the monarch had a patent drawn,
Like Paradise—all praise—investing Sám
With Mai of Hind, Danbar, Kábulistán,
All from the Indus to the sea of Chín,
V. 145 And from Zábul up to the stream of Bust,
Drawn strictly in accord to precedent.
The patent written and the gifts prepared,
They ordered out the horses for that chief
Of paladins, who rising spake and said:—
"O chosen lord of justice and of right!
Know that between the Moon and Fish no Sháh
Like thee e'er wore the crown; thy goodness, prudence,
Beneficence, and rede rejoice the age.
In thine eyes all the world's wealth is despised:
May men remember no one's name but thine."
He then advanced and kissed the throne.
They bound
The kettledrums upon the elephants
And started for Zábulistán. The towns
And villages turned out to gaze. When Sám
Approached Nímrúz 'twas bruited that the prince—
The lustre of the world—had come with presents,
A crown of gold, grant, patent, and gold girdle.

Sístán was decked throughout like Paradise;
Its bricks were gold and all its soil pure musk.
They flung about dínárs, musk, drachms, and saffron,
And made a holiday for all alike.
The aspiring chiefs from all sides went to Sám,
And said: "May this youth's steps prove fortunate
For thee, blithe-hearted, famous paladin!"
And as they blessed him showered gems o'er Zál.
For each man worthy was a gift prepared,
A robe of honour suited to his station
As being eminent in rank or lore,
While emulation caused all hopes to soar.

§ 6

How Sám gave the Kingdom to Zál

Thereafter Sám set forth before his son
The various virtues that adorn a king,
And having called the fathers of the realm V. 146
Harangued them in set terms at large, and said:—
"Ye holy archimages, wise of heart!
Our monarch in his wisdom ordereth
That I should march upon Mázandarán
Against the Kargasárs.[1] I take with me
A mighty host; my son—mine own heart's blood
And partner of my life—abideth here.
I in the days of youth and arrogance
Pronounced a monstrous sentence on the boy.
God gave to me a son: I cast him out
In ignorance, not wotting of his worth.
Him the Símurgh, that noble bird, bare off,
Him too the Maker passed not by in scorn.

[1] The name of a wild tribe, "the Vulture-heads."

What I despised was precious to the fowl,
Which reared him till he seemed a lofty cypress,
And when the time for pardon came the Lord
Of all the world—God—gave him back to me.
Regard him as my representative,
As mine own self committed to your charge;
I leave to you to teach him what is good
And kindle every virtue in his breast.
Hold him in honour, give him sound advice,
Impart good principles and lofty aims,
For as the Sháh commandeth I depart
With other chiefs against our enemies."
He turned to Zál and said: "Be peaceful, just,
And liberal, hold Zábulistán as home
And all things there as subject to thy will.
Be thine to make the home more beautiful
And friends more happy. Of my treasure-hoards
I leave the key with thee, thy gain is weal,
Thy loss is woe to me. In feast and fight
Do whatsoe'er thy bright soul holdeth good."
Zál answered: "Can I live on here? If one
V. 147 Was ever born defective it was I,
And I have cause to wail. Put me not further
Than ever from thee now that peace hath come.
While I was neath the talons of the bird,
Sucked blood and fared in dust, dwelt in a nest
And had a fowl for friend, I was esteemed
A fowl myself; but she that fostered me
Is far away. Such is fate's fostering!
I have no portion of the rose but thorns
And must submit."
Sám answered: "Be at ease.
Let thy heart rest; command whate'er thou wilt.
The astrologers declare a gracious purpose
Concerning thee—that here shall be thy home

With host and crown. We cannot thwart heaven's will;
Thy portion is to spread around thee love.
Now gather to thee cavaliers and sages,
Delight in men of wisdom, list and learn
From them, be instant both in feast and bounty,
And instant too in justice and all knowledge."
He ceased. The din of tymbals rose, earth turned
To iron and the air to ebony;
The Indian bells and gongs clanged at the portal
As Sám the chief departed to the war V. 148
With troops equipped and eager. For two stages
Zál went to see his father lead the host.
His sire then clasped him closely. Rose wild wailing;
Zál wept his heart's blood down his cheeks, but Sám
Bade him return and go with happy heart
Back to the throne and crown; yet Zál returned
In grief—a happy life without his father!
He sat upon the famous ivory throne,
He set the shining crown upon his head,
He took the armlet and the oxhead mace,
The golden necklace and the golden girdle,
And called the archmages out of every province
In quest of knowledge both of men and things.
Astrologers and men of sanctity,
Brave warriors and warlike cavaliers,
Were with him night and day and counselled him
In every matter, whether great or small.
He profited so much that thou hadst said:—
"He shineth as a star!" In policy
And understanding he had not a peer,
His horsemanship was famous with the great,
Folk thronged him in amazement at his beauty,
And whether near or distant used to think
The camphor locks of Zál as black as ink.

§ 7

How Zál visited Mihráb of Kábul

One day Zál set forth on a royal progress
V. 149 With chiefs attached to him in rede and Faith
To view Kábul, Dunbar, Margh, Mai and Ind.
At every stage he set him up a throne
And called for wine and harp and minstrelsy.
He lavished treasure and indulged in pleasure,
As is the fashion in this Wayside Inn,
And reached Kábul with gladness in his heart.
There was a certain monarch hight Mihráb,
A wealthy and successful potentate,
In stature like a noble cypress-tree,
With cheeks like springtide and with pheasant's tread;
He had a sage's heart, a ruler's brain,
A warrior's shoulders and archmage's sense.
Descended from Zahhák, he ruled Kábul,
But having not the power to fight with Sám
Paid yearly tribute. Hearing that Sám's son
Had come, he left Kábul at dawn with treasure,
With steeds caparisoned, slave-boys, dínárs,
Musk, rubies, spicery, brocade of gold,
Silks, beaver-skins, a royal jewelled crown
And golden torque with emerald ornaments.
He took the chiefs and army of Kábul
As escort. Tidings reached the son of Sám:—
"The stately chief is coming in his state."
Zál went to meet and greet him courteously
With every honour due. In merry mood
They came together to the turquoise throne;
A table fit for paladins was spread
And all sat down with gladness to the feast.

There, while cup-bearers handed cups and wine,
Mihráb observed the son of Sám, on whom
He joyed to gaze, and whom he longed to serve.
Zál's wit and prudence made Mihráb exclaim:— V. 150
"His mother is immortal!"
When Mihráb
Rose from the board, Zál marked his mien and limbs,
And said before the chiefs: "Who girdeth him
More gracefully? Who hath such mien and carriage?
Men would pronounce him matchless in the fight."
One of the noble chieftains said to Zál:—
"He hath a daughter in his house whose face
Is fairer than the sun, like ivory
From head to foot, with cheeks like Paradise,
And as a teak in height. Two musky ringlets
Fall o'er her silvern neck, the ends of them
Would serve for ankle-rings. Her cheeks are like
Pomegranate-blossoms, she hath cherry lips,
Her silvern breasts bear two pomegranate-grains,
Her eyes are twin narcissi in a garden,
Their lashes blackness rapt from raven's plumes,
Her brows are like two bows made at Taráz,
Whipped with the purest musk. If thou wouldst seek
A moon, there is her face; if thou wouldst scent
The musk, there is her hair. From head to foot
She is as Paradise—all music, charm,
And beauty."
This raised tumult in the heart
Of Zál, and rest and reason fled from him;
He thought: "There is no doubt that this fair maid
Is like the sun and moon, for since the sire
Is comely still, how fair the child must be!"
Night came; Zál sat in sad and anxious thought, V. 151
Concerned for her whom he had never seen,
But when the sun's rays struck the mountain-tops

And made the world white crystal he gave audience,
And warriors with their golden scabbards came
To grace the portal of the paladin.
As these great men were calling for their steeds,
Mihráb, the ruler of Kábul, approached
The tent of Zál, the ruler of Zábul.
When he arrived the word was: "Clear the way."
Fresh in his beauty as a laden fruit-tree
He came to Zál, who welcomed him with joy,
Gave him the chiefest room and said: "Request
Whate'er thou wilt—throne, signet, sword or crown."
Mihráb replied: "Exalted, conquering king,
Whose word is law! But one desire have I,
And that an easy one for thee to grant—
That thou be pleased to visit me and make
My soul bright as the sun."
Zál said: "Not so:
Thy palace is not one that I may visit,
For Sám would not approve, nor would the Sháh,
Of us for drinking wine and getting drunk
With idol-worshippers. Save this request
We grant thee all and joy to see thy face."
On hearing this Mihráb did reverence,
But in his heart called Zál an infidel,
Then strode forth blessing much the son of Sám,
Who as he went praised him as he deserved.
V. 152 Now no one hitherto had noticed him,
For all had thought him an outlandish dív,
And since his Faith and manners were not theirs
Refrained from praising him; but when Zál spake
His admiration with such warmth, the courtiers
Began to praise him too, his mien, his stature,
His polished manners, tact and courtesy,
While as for Zál his heart went clean distraught,
His wisdom fled afar and love was lord.

An Arab chief once said in this regard:—
"A horse shall while I live my comrade be,
The vault of circling heaven shall shelter me;
I want no bride to make me delicate,
And cause the wise to mock at mine estate."
Zál, who was stricken to the heart by care,
Kept brooding o'er the matter, sorely pained
For fear lest scandal might result and dim
His glory. Thus heaven oft revolved above,
And all the while his heart was full of love.

§ 8

How Rúdába took Counsel with her Damsels

It came to pass that at the dawn one day
Mihráb walked stately from the audience-chamber,
And going toward his women's bower beheld
Two Suns within the hall; one was Rúdába,
The fair of face, the other was Síndukht,
The prudent and devoted; both were decked
Like garths in spring—all colour, scent, and grace.
He gazed upon Rúdába wonderingly,
Invoking blessings on her. In his eyes
She seemed a cypress neath the orbèd moon, V. 153
Encrowned with ambergris, decked with brocade
And gems—a very Paradise of wealth!
Síndukht, whose smiles displayed her pearly teeth,
Between her jujube lips asked of Mihráb:—
"How did thy visit prosper? May the hand
Of ill be far from thee! What is he like—
Sám's hoary son? What is he suited for—
A nest or throne? Doth he behave as man,
And walk in chieftains' steps?"
Mihráb replied:—
"O fair-faced Cypress with the silvern breast!

Of all the warrior-paladins of earth
Not one can tread his steps; there is no portrait
Inside our halls with such a bridle-hand,
Or such another cavalier on horseback.
He is in heart a lion and in strength
An elephant: his hands are like the Nile.
When he is on the throne he scattereth gold,
When he is in the fray he scattereth heads.
His cheek is ruddy as the cercis-bloom:
Shrewd, young in years and fortune too is he,
In battle like the baleful crocodile,
On horseback like a dragon with sharp claws.
He layeth in the fight the dust with blood
And brandisheth his falchion of blue-steel.
He hath this one defect—his hair is white;
Fault-finders find in him no other fault;
Yet this white hair of his becometh him,
And thou wouldst say: 'He fascinateth hearts.'"
On hearing this Rúdába blushed, with cheeks
Red as pomegranate-blossoms, while her heart
Became fulfilled with fire for love of Zál:
She could not eat or rest in peace; a change
Came in her disposition and demeanour,
For passion had usurped the place of wisdom.
V. 154 How goodly were the teacher's words: "Deny
All talk of men when there are women by;
The heart of woman is the Dív's abode,
If thou suggestest she will find the road."
Rúdába had five Turkman waiting-maids,
Five faithful slaves, all girls of prudent minds;
To them she said: "I have a secret for you,
Since all of you are in my confidence,
Attend upon me, and dispel my cares;
Know then, all five of you, and understand,
And luck go with you all your years, that I—

I am in love, and like a raging sea
Whose billows surge to heaven! Mine ardent heart
Is full of love for Zál, and in my sleep
I cannot tear my thoughts from him. His love
Possesseth me, heart, mind, and wits; I muse
Upon his features day and night; and now
Means must be found to free me from my woe.
None knoweth of my secret but yourselves,
For ye are good and love me."
Then the slaves
Thought in amaze: "The princess doth amiss!"
Rose at her like so many Áhrimans
And said: "O crown of ladies in the world!
O daughter eminent among the mighty,
Admired from Hindústán to Chín, and like
A shining signet in the women's bower!
No cypress in the garden equalleth
Thy height; thy cheeks outshine the Pleiades.
Thy portrait hath been sent out to Kannúj,
To Mai, and to the monarch of the West.
Hath modesty departed from thine eyes
And all consideration for thy sire
That thou shouldst long to clasp upon thy bosom
One whose own father hath rejected him—
One fostered on a mountain by a fowl— V. 155
A spectacle for all the folk? No mother
Excepting his hath borne an agèd babe.
Such offspring is ignoble. Strange indeed
For two such coral lips and musky hair
To seek a dotard! Why, all folk love thee;
Thy portrait is in all their palaces;
Thy stature, face, and hair are such that Sol
Would come from his fourth heaven to be thy spouse!"
Rúdába heard, her heart flared up like fire
Before a blast of air. She shrieked at them,

With frowns that shut her eyes, exclaiming: "Bah!
Ye strive in vain: it booteth not to hear.
If to some star I lost my heart, could I
Find any satisfaction in the moon?
Clay-eaters do not gaze upon the rose
Although the rose is better than the clay.
If vinegar will cure a body's liver,
Then honey will but make the anguish worse.
I want not Cæsar or Faghfúr of Chín,
Or any of the princelings of Írán:
Zál, son of Sám, is tall enough for me
And lion-like in shoulder, neck, and arm;
For whether people call him old or young
To me he giveth peace of soul and mind.
Talk not of other men, be his my heart,
Bit as it is by love of one whom I
Have never seen! It chooseth by report.
I do not love his face and hair but him;
'Tis for his merits that I seek his love."
The slaves, on hearing her distracted voice,
And having learned her secret, cried: "Thy slaves
V. 156 Are we and serve thee with devoted hearts.
Command us! Naught but good will come of it."
One said: "O Cypress-stem! let none else know.
A hundred thousand of us for thy life!
May all Creation's wisdom be thine aid!
Should there be need to study grammarye,
And stitch up eyes with artifice and spell,
Then will we fly like an enchanter's bird,
Or run along like deer to give thee aid,
So we may bring this king to thee our Moon,
And lay him at thy feet."
Rúdába smiled,
Turned safflower cheeks toward the slave and said:—
"If thou canst compass this thou wilt have planted

A tall tree bearing rubies day by day
Which wisdom in its breast will bear away."

§ 9

How Rúdába's Damsels went to see Zál

The slaves arose and went, remediless
Themselves they sought a remedy for her.
So donning raiment of brocade of Rúm,
And twisting roses in their hair, they went,
The five of them, toward the river-side,
Like jocund spring—all colour and perfume.
'Twas Farwardín, the first month of the year,
And Zál's encampment was beside the stream;
The damsels were upon the farther bank.
Their talk was all of Zál. They gathered roses
Along the river-side. Their cheeks were like
A rosary, and roses filled their laps;
But still they gathered roaming here and there.
When they came opposite the royal tent
Zál, spying them from his high throne, inquired:—
"Who are these flower-worshippers?"
One said:— V. 157
"The Beauty of Kábulistán hath sent
Forth from the palace of bright-souled Mihráb
Her waiting-maidens to the rosary."
Zál's heart beat fast, and being love-distraught
He walked attended by a single slave
Beside the stream. Upon the further bank
He saw the girls, drew himself up and bade
The Turkman slave-boy bring the bow; then looked
For game and lighted on a water-fowl.
The ruddy Turkman slave-boy strung the bow
And laid it in the paladin's left hand,
Who flushed the fowl and shot it as it rose.

Blood dyed the water. Zál said: "Go across
And fetch yon crippled bird."
The gallant Turkman
Crossed in a boat. The slave-girls questioned him
About the paladin: "This lion-limbed
And elephantine-bodied warrior—
Who is he? Of what people is he king?
What foe could counter him? We never saw
A finer cavalier or better shot."
The pretty slave-boy bit his lip and said:—
"Speak not so of the king. The son of Sám
Is monarch of Nímrúz, and other kings
Call him 'Dastán.' The sky revolveth not
O'er cavalier like him, nor will time see
His peer."
The damsels laughed and answered thus
The moon-faced boy: "Say not such things because
V. 158 Mihráb hath now a Moon within his palace,
Who is a whole head taller than thy king,
A teak in stature, ivory in hue,
Crowned with a crown of musk, a thing divine.
Her eyes are pensive and her eyebrows arched;
Their column is a silvern reed. Her mouth
Is narrow as the heart of one forlorn,
Her tresses' ends are coiled like ankle-rings,
Her witching eyes are full of dreamy light,
Her cheeks are tulip-like in hue, her locks
Like musk; her soul is breathing through her lips.
A matchless Moon is she! We from Kábul
Approach the monarch of Zábul in state,
And 'tis our policy to introduce
Our lady's ruby lips to those of Zál,
Which is but well and seemly, for she is
Of equal rank."
On hearing this the slave-boy

Flushed ruby-like. "The Sun should wed the Moon,"
He said. "Whene'er the world would make a match
The hearts of all concerned find room for love,
And when the world would cause a severance
It parteth mate from mate without a word.
Love's bond is hidden but its rupture seen,
And both are common. Still the bachelor
Enjoyeth peace at home, and since he hath
No daughter, will not hear reproachful words.
Once said the male hawk to his brooding mate:—
'If hen-birds only from these eggs thou bring
Thou makest of the sire a sexless thing.'"
Now when the laughing slave-boy had returned V. 159
Zál asked: "What was it that they said to thee
To make thee laugh and show thy silvern teeth?"
He told the paladin, whose heart grew young
With joy. He bade the moon-faced youth: "Return
And say thus to yon damsels: 'Stay awhile
Among the roses; ye perchance may take
Some gems as well as blossoms from the garden,
So go not till ye hear from me.'"
He took
Gold, jewelry, and drachms, with five rich pieces
Of gold brocade and bade his slaves: "Convey them
To yonder girls, tell none and be not seen."
They took the treasures with an ardent message
And gave them to the damsels in Zál's name.
Then said one damsel to the moon-faced page:—
"A matter never can be kept concealed
Unless it be confined to only two;
Three are no casket, four are all the world.
So say to him, shrewd, trusty boy: 'If thou
Hast secret things to say tell us in person.'"
Rúdába's damsels said to one another:—
"The Lion hath been taken in the toils.

The wishes of Rúdába and of Zál
Have been fulfilled, and matters promise well."
The black-eyed youth, who brought the monarch's gifts
And acted for him, went and told his chief
In secret what those charming damsels said.
V. 160 Zál went. Those rosy Idols of Taráz
Drew near and did obeisance. He inquired
About that Cypress-stem, her mien and looks,
Her speech, her wisdom, and her rede, to see
If she were worthy of him. "Speak," he said,
"Without attempting to prevaricate.
If ye speak truth it will advantage you,
But if I think that ye impose upon me
An elephant shall trample you to death."
With cheeks that had become like sandarac
The slave-girls kissed the ground before the chief,
And one of them—the youngest of the troop,
A girl of tenderness and ready speech,
Spake thus to Zál: "Among the mighty none
Hath e'er been born of woman in this world
Who could compare with Sám in looks and stature,
In purity, in courage, sense, and knowledge;
Or yet with thee, thou valiant cavalier,
Of lofty bearing and of lion-limbs!
Or with Rúdába in her loveliness,
A silvern Cypress, coloured and perfumed,
Compact from head to foot of rose and jasmine,
While over it Canopus of Yaman
Is shining. One would say: 'Her face distilleth
Wine, and her locks are scents.' Insidious lassos
Fall from her head, that cupola of silver,
O'er cheeks of roses to the very ground.
Her head is all a-twine with ambergris
And musk, her person all a-shine with jewels.

Her locks and ringlets are like musky mail
Where 'there is link on link' as one might say.
Thou wilt not see in Chín so fair an Idol:
The moon and Pleiades bow down to her."
The chief on fire rejoined in sugared tones:—
"Say, if thou knowest, how I may approach her. V. 161
I love her, heart and soul, and long to see
Her face."
She answered: "We, if thou shalt bid us,
Will haste back to the palace of our Cypress,
And then beguile her, telling all we can
About the chief of paladins, his prudence,
His looks, his converse, and his ardent soul,
And 'tis an honest work. We will ensnare
Her musky head and bring her lips to Zál's.
The paladin, a lasso in his hand,
May haply stroll toward our stately home
And fling the noose around a pinnacle.
The Lion will rejoice to hunt the Lamb.
Then gaze thy fill on her. Our talk shall be
The earnest of far more felicity."

§ 10

How the Damsels returned to Rúdába

The girls departed, and Zál thought the night
A year. Meanwhile they reached the palace-gate,
Each with two sprays of roses, where the porter,
On catching sight of them, prepared to chide,
And spake with sternness, hardening his heart:—
"A nice time this to be beyond the gates!
I marvel at your gadding so about."
The Idols, when they found a word to say,
Flew out at him in their embarrassment:—

"This day is just like any other one:
There is no foul dív in the rosary.
'Tis spring. We gather roses in the garden,
And spikes of hyacinth upon the ground.
Moon-faced Rúdába bade, and so we went
Hence after roses out of love for her;
Then wherefore speak to us in such a tone
For plucking them?"

V. 162 "But this is not the time,"
He said, "for pranks like these; for bear in mind
That Zál the chieftain now is at Kábul:
The land is covered with his tents and troops.
Do ye not see Mihráb at early dawn
Go from his palace-gate and mount his steed?
Why, every day he goeth to and fro
Now he and Zál have come to be such friends,
And if he saw you carrying your roses
Would have you down upon the ground forthwith.
Quit not the Haram more, and would to God
That nothing great or small may come of this."

They went within and told the Moon in private:—
"We ne'er saw Sun like this with ruddy cheeks
And hair all white."

Rúdába's heart inflamed
In expectation of beholding Zál.
They laid his jewels and dínárs before her,
While she minutely questioned them: "How found ye
The son of Sám? Doth he deserve his fame?"

The five, encouraged, chattered on and said:—
"Zál is the finest horseman, with such mien
And Grace—a lofty cypress of a man.
Imperial Grace and dignity are his.
What fragrance, colour, stature, limbs, he hath!
How slim a waist and what an open chest!
His eyes are twin narcissi water-blue,

His lips like coral and his cheeks like blood.
His hand and forearm are like lion's paws.
A shrewd man he, with an archmage's heart
And royal Grace! while as for his white hair
It is a blemish—but no cause for shame.
This chief of paladins hath downy cheeks,
Like cercis-bloom through silver habergeon,
Such as to make one cry: 'Be ever thus: V. 163
No change can make thee dearer than thou art.'
We told him he should see thee; he was hopeful
When we departed. Now devise a scheme
To entertain him. Tell us what to tell him."
She answered: "Once ye told a different tale!
This Zál, who was the nursling of a bird,
Was so white-headed and so wizened! Now
His cheek is like the cercis-bloom, and he
Is tall and handsome, and a paladin!
And ye have bragged about my face to him
And asked for payment for your gossiping."
She spake with smiles and blushes on her cheeks,
As 'twere pomegranate-blooms, then bade one damsel:—
"Be off with you at dawn. Take him good news,
Hear what he hath to say and say to him:—
'Thy wish is granted; be in readiness;
Come and behold thy Moon in all her charms.'"
The waiting-maid departed, gave the message,
And came back to the Cypress of Taraz.
"Devise some means to compass it," she said,
"For God hath granted thee thy whole desire,
And may the ending be a happy one!"
Rúdába soon made ready, while her kin
Suspected naught. She had her own pavilion
Like jocund spring and decked with great men's portraits.
The servants draped it with brocade of Chín,

Set golden trays about as ornaments,
Then mingled wine with musk and ambergris
And scattered emeralds and carnelians.
Here were narcissus, violet, cercis-bloom
And rose, there lily and the jasmine-spray.
The goblets were compact of gold and turquoise,
The viands saturate with clear rose-water;
V. 164 Thus from the chamber of the sun-faced one
Rose fragrant odours wafting to the sun.

§ 11

How Zál went to Rúdába

At dusk they locked the gate and took the key,
And then a damsel went to Zál and said:—
"All is prepared, so come."
Thereat the chief,
All wooer-like, set out toward the palace.
Meanwhile black-eyed and rosy-cheeked Rúdába—
A cypress over which the full moon shone—
Went to the roof, and, when the son of Sám
The cavalier appeared, that high-born maid
Unlocked her coral lips and cried to him:—
"Thou art well come, O youth of noble birth!
The Maker's blessing be on thee, the arch
Of circling heaven be underneath thy feet,
And may my maid be blithe of heart and glad,
For, top to toe, thou art as she described thee.
To foot it thus from thy pavilion
Must irk thy royal feet."
He heard the voice
And saw upon the wall a sun-cheeked damsel,
Whose beauty set the roof a-gleam like gems,
Whose blushes set the ground a-flush like rubies.

He thus made answer: "O thou moon-faced one!
My blessing and the Grace of heaven be thine.
How many nights with eyes up-turned to Spica
Have I entreated Him who ruleth all,
To let me privily behold thy face!
Now thou dost make me happy with thy voice,
Thy tender words and gentleness. Oh! find
Some means to let me look on thee! For why
Shouldst thou be on the roof and I below?"
The fairy-faced one heard the chieftain's words V. 165
And doffed her scarlet wimple instantly.
Then from her lofty cypress-form she loosed
A lasso, such as none could plait, of musk:
Coil within coil it was, and snake on snake;
Strand over strand it lay upon her neck.
She loosed her tresses o'er the battlements
And when they straightened out they reached the ground.
Then spake Rúdába from the wall above:—
"O paladin! O child of warrior-race!
Now speed thee quickly and gird up thy loins,
Exert thy lion-breast and royal hands.
Seize these black tresses which hang down beside me
All dedicate to thee."
Zál gazed on her
In marvel at her hair and face. She heard
Him kiss that musky lasso oft. He said:—
"This is not well; may no sun shine when I
Shall lay a wanton hand upon my Life
And put a spearpoint to this wounded heart."
He took a lasso from his servant, coiled
And lightly flung it in his breathless haste.
The noose caught and he mounted. Fairy-face
Advanced to welcome him, she clasped his hand,
And both intoxicate with love descended,

V. 166 Hand clasped in hand, to her pavilion
Gold-arabesqued—a meeting-place for kings,
A Paradise adorned—a blaze of light.
Slave-girls attended on the Houri there,
While Zál in rapt astonishment beheld
Her face, her hair, her loveliness and grace,
Her bracelets, torque, and earrings: her brocade
And jewels were like gardens in the spring;
Her cheeks were like twin tulips in a garth;
Her crispy love-locks twisted curl on curl.
Zál sat in royal grace by that fair Moon,
His dagger in his belt and on his head
A ruby coronet. Rúdába looked
And looked with stolen glances at him still;
Looked at that form, that neck, that grace, that height,
Which used to make rocks brambles 'neath his mace,
And at those cheeks whose lustre fired her soul.
The more she gazed the more her heart inflamed:
They kissed and clung intoxicate with love.
What lion hunteth not the onager?
Thus spake the chieftain to the moon-faced maid:—
"O silver-bosomed Cypress, musk-perfumed!
The Sháh will ne'er consent, and Sám will wring
His hands and storm, but still by God I swear
That I will never break my troth to thee.
Nay I will first hold soul and body cheap
And wear a shroud. I will seek God and pray Him,
With all the instancy of devotees,
To wash all opposition, wrath, and vengeance
V. 167 From both their hearts, and if He hearkeneth
Thou shalt become my wife before the world."
Rúdába answered: "I too swear by Him—
The God of Faith and right—that none but Zál
Shall be my lord; the Maker is my witness."

Their love waxed ever as the moments sped,
For wisdom was afar and passion near.
So fared they till the day began to break
And drum-call sounded. Zál farewelled his Moon,
Embracing her as warp and woof embrace.
Both wept and both adjured the rising sun:—
"O glory of the world! one moment more!
Thou needst not rise so soon."
Then from aloft
Zál dropped his lasso and descending straight
Went from the palace of his lovely mate.

§ 12

How Zál consulted the Archimages in the Matter of Rúdába

The warriors, when bright Sol rose o'er the hills,
Went to the levee of the paladin,
And then dispersed while Zál bade call the sages.
They came—the ministers, archmages, heroes
And glorious chieftains, men both wise and ardent—
Well pleased at being summoned. Zál, all smiles
And yearning, offered first his praise to God,
Then roused the archimages to attention
By thus addressing them: "Let all our hearts
Regard with fear and hope the righteous Judge,
Who is the Lord of circling sun and moon, V. 168
And showeth souls the way of righteousness.
To give Him all the praise that we can give
We must bow down before Him night and day.
By Him the jocund world abideth fast,
By Him is justice done in heaven and earth.
He bringeth summer, spring, and autumn-tide
With fruit to fill the branches of the vines;

Youth hath from Him its time of scent and bloom,
Age hath from Him its time of saddened looks.
None can transgress His will and ordinance:
Without Him not an ant can walk the earth.
He bringeth increase to the world by pairs,
And not by one; there is no One but God,
Who hath not any partner, mate, or peer,
But all His creatures hath He made in pairs.
This was His scheme—earth and its good for man;
But save for pairing we had never known
Its possibilities. Again, we never
See youth unmated stable in the Faith,
And thirdly, men though of a mighty stock
Unmated lose their vigour. What can show
More goodly than a chief of paladins,
Whose soul is gladdened by his progeny?
He at life's close will have a New Year's Day
In children who will keep his memory thus:—
'This is the son of Zál the son of Sám.'
Thus crown and throne are graced; the father's time
Being over fortune resteth with the son.
All these apply to mine own case, and are
The roses and narcissi of my garden.
V. 169 My heart is lost, my wisdom fled! Declare
The remedy for this. I have not spoken
Before I suffered both in brain and wits.
The palace of Mihráb—I love it all!
His land is heaven to me forwhy my heart
Rejoiceth in the daughter of Síndukht.
What say ye now? Will Sám too be rejoiced?
And will Sháh Minúchihr, if he shall hear,
Regard it merely as a youthful error?
All—great and small—in marrying but obey
The laws of Faith and custom. No wise man
Will bar what honour and religion sanction.

What do the prescient archimages say?
What are the sages' views?"
They held their peace
Because Zahhák was grandsire to Mihráb,
And Minúchihr detested both. None dared
To answer, none had heard of antidote
And bane combined. Their silence grieved the chief,
Who tried another plan: "I know," said he,
"That ye will blame the course that I adopt,
But every one who chooseth for himself
Is certain to incur no lack of blame.
If ye can show me what to do, and how
I may undo this coil, ye shall be treated
As subjects ne'er were yet, my goodness, kindness,
And uprightness shall keep you from all ill."
The archimages, well disposed toward him,
Considered and replied: "We are thy slaves, V. 170
And we are much amazed. But who will be
The better or the worse on this account?
Although Mihráb is not of equal rank
Yet is he mighty, brave, and rich, albeit
Sprung from the Dragon's stock—the Arabs' king.
Write thou to Sám as thy shrewd mind suggesteth,
Who hast more wisdom, thoughtfulness, and wits
Than we, and he may write the Sháh a letter
Explaining his own views, and Minúchihr
Will be advised by Sám the cavalier
And every obstacle will disappear."

§ 13

How Zál wrote to Sám to Explain the Case

The chieftain bade a scribe to come, poured forth
His heart and wrote a letter of good cheer,

And first he praised the Maker and the Judge,
"The Source of joy and might, the Lord of Venus,
Of Sol and Mars, of being and not being.
We all of us are slaves and God is One.
May He bless Sám the son of Narímán—
The lord of mace, of scimitar, and helm,
Whose black steed boundeth in the dust of fight,
Who glutteth vultures when he maketh war,
Who raiseth tempests on the battle-field,
Who sheddeth gouts of blood from murky clouds,
V. 171 Who handleth golden belts and diadems
And setteth kings upon their thrones of gold.
His bravery achieveth feat on feat
And they exalt his name. There liveth not,
Nor ever will, a cavalier so brave.
His thrall am I and love him heart and soul.
He saw how I was born, and ills have come
Since then upon me from the rolling sky.
My father wore luxurious furs and silks;
Me the Símurgh bare to a mount in Ind.
Fain was I that the bird should bring me prey
And number me among its little ones.
My skin was scorched by blast, mine eyes were stopped
With dust. They used to call me son of Sám
Though he was on a throne, I in a nest,
Since God ordained and made this way for me.
None scapeth His ordainment though one fly
Among the clouds, gnaw spearheads, rend the hides
Of lions with his shouting, yea although
His teeth are anvils he is still God's slave.
A thing hath happened which I cannot tell
To every one, and I am broken-hearted,
Howbeit a sire, though fierce and dragon-like,
Should hearken to the secrets of his child.
My tears are for the daughter of Mihráb,

I am as if consumed in raging fire,
The stars are my companions in the night,
My breast is like a sea, I lose my wits
So that my people weep; yet though sore troubled
I will not draw a breath but at thy word.
What doth the chief of paladins command? V. 172
Oh! free my mind from this distress and grief!
The archimages have advised me thus:—
'Let not the chieftain keep his Jewel hidden
But act with loyalty.' My sire perchance
Will second me herein that I may make
The daughter of Mihráb my lawful wife.
My father will remember that when God
Restored me to him out of Mount Alburz
He pledged his word in presence of his men:—
'I will not frustrate one wish of thy heart.'
Now this it is whereon my heart is set."
A horseman left Kábul at lightning-speed
To go to Sám and took a second horse,
For Zál directed: "Should one roadster founder
Stay not to breathe but lightly mount the other
And hurry on to Sám."
The messenger
Went, like the wind, upon a steed of steel.
When he was drawing near the Kargasárs,
Sám, who was hunting on a range of hills,
Beheld him from afar and told his comrades:—
"There cometh from Kábul a messenger
Upon a white steed of Zábulistán,
Sent doubtlessly by Zál, so let us learn
His news."
The man approaching kissed the ground,
With many thanks to God. Sám welcomed him
And took the letter, while the man discharged
His errands. Sám undid and read the letter V. 173

While coming from the mountains, paled and halted
In wonder not expecting or commending
Zál's conduct. "Yet," he thought, "'tis natural:
One nurtured by a bird would hanker thus."
When he returned he pondered long and deeply,
And said: "If I shall say, 'This is not well,
Oppose me not, incline to wisdom's ways,'
Both God and man will blame my breach of faith.
If I say,' Yes,' and 'Thy desire is good:
Do as thou wilt,' what will their offspring be—
This nursling of the fowl and that dív's child?"
He laid him down in grief but could not rest.
The harder any servant's task, the more
His heart is heavy and his suffering sore,
The greater peace and comfort shall he know
Within when God Almighty willeth so.

§ 14

How Sám consulted the Archmages in the Matter of Zál

Sám when he woke asked the astrologers:—
"How will this end, for these two elements,
Like fire and water, are opposed completely?
Such surely on the Judgment Day will be
The warfare of Zahhák and Farídún.
Consult the stars, vouchsafe me your advice,
And put your pen-point to a lucky sign."
V. 174 They spent the day in searching, and then came
To Sám with smiles, for opposites combined
In his behalf, and an astrologer
Said: "Hero of the golden belt! we bring
Good news about the daughter of Mihráb
And Zál, for they will be a glorious pair,
Whose son will prove a mighty Elephant,

Will gird his loins with valour, overcome
The world, will set the Sháh's throne on the clouds,
Cut from the ground the feet of evil doers
And leave them not a lurking-place on earth,
Spare no Sagsárs,[1] spare not Mázandarán,
But make the earth clean with his massive mace.
Through him Túrán shall suffer greater woe,
Through him Írán shall gain unbounded weal,
Through him the aching head shall rest, and he
Shall shut the door of war, the path of mischief.
The Íránians shall have hope in him, through him
The paladin shall have good news and joy.
The charger that he urgeth in the fight
Shall trample on the face of warrior-pards.
The realm in his days shall be fortunate,
The age accept his name among the kings,
While Rúm, Ind, and the country of Írán
Shall grave it on their signets."

Sám gave ear
And smiled as they congratulated him.
He gave them gold and silver past all count
Since peace had come in time of fear. He called
The messenger, conversed with him and said:—
"Speak gently unto Zál and say: 'Thy wish
Hath nothing in its favour, but since I
Have pledged my word I must not seek a pretext
For breaking it. Lo! I shall quit the field V. 175
To-morrow for Írán to ascertain
The Sháh's commands, and how God shall dispose him.'"
He gave a largess to the messenger
And said to him: "Arise and tarry not."
They bound a thousand of the Kargasárs
And dragged them off afoot in shame and woe.

[1] The name of a wild tribe, "the Dog-heads."

Toward dawn the horsemen's shouts rose o'er the plain,
Rose too the sound of drums and clarions
About the entrance of the tent-enclosure,
And Sám marched to Írán by Dahistán.
The messenger returned to Zál in triumph
With omens of success. When he arrived
He told Sám's answer. Zál was well content
And offered praises to Almighty God
For this great mercy and his blissful fate.
He lavished on the poor drachms and dínárs
And showed especial kindness to his kindred,
Invoking blessings on the chieftain Sám
For having sent a gentle answer back.
He could not rest by day or sleep by night,
He drank no wine, desired no minstrelsy;
His heart was always yearning for his bride;
He could not talk of any one beside.

§ 15

How Síndukht heard of the Case of Rúdába

A dame of honied speech was go-between
And bore the lovers' greetings to and fro.
Zál called this woman, told about his sire,
And said to her: "Go to Rúdába. Say:
V. 176 'O Beauty kind and young! when matters come
To grievous straits we quickly find a key
For their enlargement. Now the messenger
Hath come from Sám rejoicing with good news.
Sám hummed and hawed but in the end consented.'"
Zál sent his father's letter by the woman,
Who hurried with the good news to Rúdába.

That fay-faced damsel showered drachms upon her,
Placed her upon a gold-embroidered seat
And for her news gave her a change of raiment;
Then brought an Indian turban woven so finely
That warp and woof were not distinguishable,
With patterns wrought thereon in gold and rubies,
So that the gold was hidden by the gems.
This, and a costly finger-ring to match,
As bright as Jupiter, she sent to Zál,
With many greetings, many messages.
Síndukht observed the woman in the hall
And cried: "Whence art thou? Speak! Dissemble not!
Thou passest in and out from time to time
Without regard to me. I much suspect thee.
Wilt thou not say if thou art string or bow?"
With face like sandarac she kissed the ground V. 177
And answered thus: "A needy woman I,
Who have to get my living as I can;
I visit houses of the gentlefolk
Who purchase clothes of me and jewelry.
Rúdába wished to buy rich gems and trinkets;
I brought to her a gold adorned tiara
And hoop of royal gems."
Síndukht said: "Show them
And quench my wrath."
"I left them with Rúdába,"
The woman answered, "and am fetching more."
"Show me the purchase-money," said Síndukht,
"And set my heart at rest."
The woman answered:—
"The moon-faced lady told me she would pay
To-morrow. Wait until I have the money."
Perceiving that she lied Síndukht used force,
Searched up her sleeves and found her knavery.

Síndukht discovering Rúdába's ring
And costly stuffs was very wroth, and catching
The woman by the tresses flung her down
V. 178 Upon her face, and in a burst of rage
Haled her in shameful plight along the ground,
Then let her fall, and bound and spurned and smote her.
The queen returned in dudgeon to the palace,
O'erwhelmed with disappointment, pain, and grief,
Shut herself in and was as one bemused.
She sent to call her daughter and the while
Kept buffeting her face, and from her eyes—
Those wet narcissi—bathed her burning cheeks;
Then to Rúdába: "O thou noble Moon!
Why choosest thou the ditch and not the throne?
In what respect can I have failed to teach thee
Propriety in public and in private?
My pretty! wherefore hast thou wronged me so?
Tell mother all thy secrets—who despatched
This dame to thee and why. What is all this?
Who is the man for whom this splendid turban
And finger-ring are meant? In that great treasure—
The Arabian crown—much good and ill was left us.
It had a name. Wilt fling it to the winds?
May mother never bear a child like mine!"
Rúdába looked away and hung her head
In overwhelming shame before her mother,
And tears of love descending graced her cheeks.
"O most wise mother!" thus she made reply,
"Love hunteth down my soul, but I had wrought
No good or ill hadst thou not borne me first.
The chieftain of Zábul is at Kábul,
And love of him so fireth me, and things
Have come to such a pass within my heart
That, if in others' presence or alone,
I weep and only live to see his face.

One hair of his is worth the world to me.
Know too that he hath seen and sat beside me, V. 179
And that we hand in hand have plighted troth.
We did but see each other—nothing more—
And lo! a fire sprang up betwixt us twain.
A messenger was sent to mighty Sám
And he hath given his valiant son an answer.
Though vexed at first he grew amenable
And gave large presents to the messenger.
By means of her whose hair thou didst pluck out,
And whom thou didst fling down and hale along
Upon the face, I have read all his letter:
This stuff was my reply."
Síndukht was lost
In wonder, glad that Zál should wed Rúdába,
But said: "This is no trifle. Zál is peerless
Among the chiefs for valour, he is great,
Son of the paladin of paladins,
With all the virtues, and a single fault
Which dwarfeth them—the Sháh will be displeased
And send the dust up sunward from Kábul.
He wisheth not that any of our race
Should e'er mount saddle."
Then, to make it seem
That she had been mistaken, she released
The woman and made much of her, and said:—
"Act ever thus, discreet and clever dame!
Shut fast thy lips. God grant they never prove
A chink for speech. Now hide this in the dust."
She saw her daughter's secret bent was such
That she would listen to advice from none,
And laid her down in tears and in chagrin;
Thou wouldst have said that she had burst her skin.

§ 16

How Mihráb was made Aware of his Daughter's Case

V. 180 Mihráb, much gratified by Zál's attentions,
Returning found Síndukht upon her couch
Pale and distressed; he asked her: "What hath happened?
Speak! Wherefore are thy rosy lips thus faded?"
She said: "I have been musing for a while
About these goodly treasures and this wealth,
These Arab steeds caparisoned, this palace
So noble and its pleasure-grounds, the friends
Who cheer our hearts, these servants of my lord,
Our favour and our stature cypress-tall,
Our fame, our knowledge, and our policy.
In time our pride and glory must abate;
We yield them to the foe; our toil is wind;
A narrow bier is ours at last. We plant
A tree whose antidote is bane to us,
We water it laboriously and hang
Thereon our crown and wealth, but when it mounteth
Sunward and giveth shade its lusty head
Descendeth to the dust. With this before us
I know not where we ever shall find rest."
Mihráb replied: "Thou tellest an old tale:
It is the fashion of this Wayside Inn.
One is abased, another flourisheth,
One cometh in, another goeth out;
Canst thou see one whom heaven hunteth not?
Fret as we will our woes remain; we cannot
Contend against the All-just Judge."
She answered:—
V. 181 "The wise would take a very different view

Of what I said. Now can I hide from thee
A secret such as this and these grave doings?
A blessèd wise archmage once told his child
The parable of the tree which I adopted
In hope my lord would understand the meaning."
She hung her head and bent her cypress-form,
Her eyes dropped dew upon her rosy cheeks.
"O full of wisdom," she went on to say,
"The sky must not revolve above us thus.
Know that the son of Sám hath striven to snare
Rúdába and misled her ardent heart.
Now 'tis for us to find a remedy.
I have exhorted her without avail;
Her heart I see is troubled, her face wan."
Thereat Mihráb sprang up and seized his sword,
His cheek grew livid and his body shook
With rage; his heart was full, he groaned and cried:—
"Her blood shall flow for this."
Síndukht sprang too,
Clasped him about the waist, and cried: "Now hear
Thy handmaid speak one word, then do what heart
And wisdom counsel thee."
He shook her off
And bellowed like a maddened elephant:—
"I should have cut her head off at her birth.
I left her grandsire's way and let her live;
Now she hath wrought on me this devilry.
The son who walketh not his father's path
Is but a bastard in a brave man's eyes.
Thus said the leopard grown keen-clawed for strife:
'I glory in the conflict, and I wis V. 182
My sire inherited the taste from his.
Life must be risked when honour is in sight;
Why strivest thou to stay me from the fight?'
If Sám and Minúchihr shall get a handle

Against us smoke will go up from Kábul,
Seedtime and harvest cease throughout the land."
She said: "O marchlord! do not speak so wildly.
Sám knoweth all: be not so greatly moved.
He left the Kargasárs for this: all know it."
Mihráb replied: "Fair dame! deceive me not.
Could one imagine wind obeying dust?
I care not I so thou canst keep us scathless.
A better son-in-law than noble Zál
There cannot be as all know, great and small.
Who is there from Ahwáz to Kandahár
That wisheth not to be affined to Sám?"
She said: "Great prince! ne'er may I be enforced
To use deceit with thee; thy harm is mine;
I share thy sorrows. What I said is true
And it was on my mind. I had at first
Myself the same misgiving, which is why
Thou sawst me lying down absorbed in grief;
But if this is to be 'tis not so strange
As to occasion this anxiety.
Sarv of Yaman pleased Farídún; prince Zál
Is not unmindful of that precedent.
By mingling fire with water, air with earth
Earth's dark face is made bright."
V. 183 She brought Sám's answer,
And said: "Rejoice! Thou hast thy wish. When strangers
Affine with thee thy foes grow black of face."
Though vengeful still and greatly moved Mihráb
Gave ear, then bade her: "Rouse and bring Rúdába."
Síndukht, in terror lest that lion-man
Should lay her daughter dead upon the dust,
Replied: "First promise to restore her to me
Unscathed, and that Kábulistán shall still
Possess this Rosary like Paradise."

The chieftain promised, but he said: "Now mark!
The Sháh will meditate revenge for this."
Síndukht did reverence, bending to the ground;
Then with her lips all smiles and face that showed
The dawn beneath the night went to her daughter
With this good news: "The warrior-leopard's claws
Have spared the wilful onager. Now hasten!
Take from thy face thine ornaments and go
Before thy father, weeping bitterly."
Rúdába answered: "What are ornaments?
What are these worthless trinkets to my wealth?
My soul is wedded to the son of Sám;
Why hide what is so plain?"
Then went she in
Before her father, like a rising sun,
And overwhelmed in gold and jewelry.
Her father called on God in mute amaze. V. 184
She was a Paradise adorned and fair,
Like shining Sol in jocund spring. He said:—
"O witless one! would virtuous folk approve
That Áhriman should have a fairy-bride?
May neither crown nor finger-ring be thine.
If but a serpent-charmer from Kahtán
Turned Magian we should slay him with an arrow."
Whenas Rúdába heard her father's words
Her heart grew full, her face like fenugreek.
She let her dark eyelashes droop and veil
Her melancholy eyes and scarcely breathed,
Her father all the while with furious heart
And full of menace roaring like a pard.
With blood returning to her pallid cheeks
His love-sick daughter went back to her chamber,
Where with her mother who had gained the day
She prayed Almighty God to be their stay.

§ 17

How Minúchihr heard of the Case of Zál and Rúdába

News of the friendship of Mihráb and Zál
And of that noble ill-matched pair of lovers
Reached Minúchihr. The matter was discussed
Before him by the archmages. Said the Sháh:—
"A dismal time will come on us hereby.
Did Farídún purge this world of Zahhák
That at Kábul Mihráb—his seed—might flourish?
V. 185 This love of Zál's must not through our neglect
Restore the drooping plant to its old vigour.
If from the daughter of Mihráb, and Zál,
The son of Sám, a sharp Sword should be drawn,
On one side he will be an alien,
And how shall antidote agree with bane?
While if he favoureth the mother's side
His head will be possessed by evil projects,
He will fulfil Írán with strife and travail
In hope to win the crown and treasure back.
What is your rede? Strive to advise me well."
Then all the archimages blessed the Sháh,
They hailed him as the king of the Pure Faith,
And said: "Thou art more wise than we and hast
More power to act. Let wisdom be thy guide,
And wisdom's quarry is the Dragon's heart."
The Sháh, desirous to conclude the matter,
Sent for Naudar, with lieges and great men,
And bade him: "Go to Sám the cavalier,
Ask: 'What hath been thy fortune in the war?'
And having seen him say: 'Come hither first,
And journey home from us.'"
Naudar set forth,
And valiant Sám, informed of his approach

Went with the paladins to welcome him
With mighty elephants and kettledrums.
Anon they met and interchanged their greetings. V. 186
The hero Sám rejoiced to see the prince,
Who gave his father's message. Sám replied:—
"I will obey and joy to look on him."
For that day they remained the guests of Sám,
The sight of whom rejoiced the company;
They spread the board, they took the cup in hand,
And first they drank the health of Minúchihr,
Then of Naudar, and then of Sám and all
The chieftains, not forgetting any province.
The livelong night was spent in revelry,
But with the sunrise rose the din of tymbals;
The speedy dromedaries spread their wings[1]
And toward the palace of Sháh Minúchihr
They went as bidden. When he heard thereof
He had the palace of the Sháhs prepared.
Then from Sárí and from Ámul rose din,
As when a fierce sea heaveth, for the spearmen
Marched in their mail with heavy darts, a host
That reached from range to range, with shield on shield,
Whose red and yellow blent, with tymbals, pipes,
Gongs, Arab horses, elephants, and treasures.
On such a fashion marched that armament
With flags and kettledrums on welcome bent.

§ 18

How Sám came to Minúchihr

Sám reached the court, alit and was received
In audience by the Sháh, at sight of whom
He kissed the ground, and then approached the presence;

[1] Metaphorically, of course.

While Minúchihr, encrowned with sparkling gems,
V. 187 Rose from his ivory throne and made Sám sit
Beside him, showed the chieftain all observance
And questioned him at large and anxiously
About the Kargasárs, about his troops,
About the fierce dívs of Mázandarán.
The chief told all and said: "Live happy ever,
O Sháh! Ne'er may foe's malice touch thy life.
I marched upon that land of valiant dívs,
And such dívs too, like lions in the fight,
More swift than Arab horses and out-daring
The warriors of Írán! The fierce Sagsárs—
Pards in the fray—concerned at mine approach,
Sent up the battle-cry within their cities,
And all turned out to fight—a mighty host,
From mountain unto mountain naught but men,
So that the bright day vanished in the dust.
All eager for the fray they came upon me,
Came with a reckless rush! A panic fell
Upon my troops. 'How shall I bear,' I thought,
'This anguish?" and I saw not; for the brunt
Had fallen then on me. I roared against them,
I whirled a mace that weighed three hundred mans[1]
And urged mine iron steed. I came among them
And brained them till the foe was panic-stricken.
The grandson of the valiant worldlord Salm,
As 'twere a wolf, was foremost of them all.
The youth was named Karkwí, a lofty Cypress,
V. 188 Descended through his mother from Zahhák.
The heads of nobles were but dust to him.
His army thronged like locusts or like ants
And hid dale, plain, and mountain. When the dust
Rose from that great host, and my troops turned pale,
I reared the mace whereof one blow sufficeth

[1] A Persian measure of weight varying greatly in different localities.

And led the army on. I raised a shout
That made earth seem a millstone to the foe,
While all my host was heartened and resolved
To battle on. Karkwí, who heard my voice,
And blows down-crashing from mine iron mace,
Came like a monstrous elephant against me
To battle, carrying a mighty lasso,
And sought to catch me in its noose, but I
Was ware and moved me from destruction's path.
I took a royal bow and poplar arrows
With points of steel, and urging on my charger
To eagle's speed I showered shafts like fire
And deemed his helm pegged to his anvil head
Until I saw him coming mid the dust,
Like some mad elephant, with Indian sword
In hand. Methought, O Sháh! that e'en the mountains
Would cry to him for quarter! He pressed on,
And I held back to tempt him to come near;
Then, when he closed with me, reached from my grey,
Seized on the girdle of that mighty man
And like a lion wrenched him from his saddle;
Then like a maddened elephant I dashed him
Upon the ground so that his bones were shivered.
Their prince o'erthrown his soldiers fled the fight;
The vales and hills, the deserts and the mountains, V 189
Were crowded everywhere, while of the fallen
Upon the field we reckoned up ten thousand
Of horse and foot. Troops, citizens, and horsemen
Were verily three hundred thousand strong;
But weighed against thy fortune what are foes
Confronted by a servant of thy throne?"

The Sháh, on hearing what his chieftain said,
Raised to the moon his glorious diadem,
Bade hold a festival and saw with joy

The world freed from his foes. The night passed quickly
In revelry and praises of the chieftain.
At dawn the Sháh held audience. Sám drew near
And having done obeisance sought to speak
About Mihráb and Zál, but was prevented
By Minúchihr, who said with angry looks:—
"Depart with chosen chiefs, burn Hindústán,
The palace of Mihráb, and all Kábul.
Let not Mihráb escape; he is a remnant
Left of the Dragon's seed, and filleth earth
V. 190 With turmoil. As for his allies and kindred,
Smite off their heads, and purify the world
Of all the kith and kindred of Zahhák."
Sám dared not speak, so wrathful was the Sháh,
But kissed the throne, then gently pressed his face
Against the famous signet and replied:—
"My conduct shall acquit the Sháh of vengeance."
Then with his host he sought his own abode
On steeds that went like wind along the road.

§ 19

How Sám went to War against Mihráb

Mihráb and Zál had news of what had passed
Between the Sháh and Sám, Kábul was moved,
And cries rose from the palace of Mihráb.
Now when Síndukht, Mihráb, and e'en Rúdába
Despaired of saving either life or goods,
Zál left Kábul, exclaiming as he went
With drooping mien yet resolute withal:
"The Dragon grim whose breath would burn the world
Must take my head off ere he touch Kábul."
In great concern he hasted on his journey,
With much to think about and much to say.

News reached brave Sám: "The Lion's Whelp hath
come."
The troops bestirred themselves and got in readiness
The flag of Farídún. They beat the tymbals,
And chief and host went out to welcome Zál
With elephants whose backs were draped with banners V. 191
Of yellow, red, and violet. Zál, on seeing
His father's face, alighted and approached
Afoot, as did the chiefs of both the hosts,
And brave Zál kissed the ground. Sám spent a while
In converse with his son, who then remounted
His chestnut Arab, like a hill of gold,
While all the chiefs approached him in concern.
"Thy father is displeased with thee," they told him;
"Make thine excuse and be not obstinate."
He said: "I fear not, for man's end is dust.
My sire if sane will not unsay his words,
And if at first he speaketh angrily
Will after weep for shame."
They reached Sám's court
With much good cheer. He lighted and gave audience
To Zál, who kissed the ground before his sire
With ruffled feathers,[1] offering praise while tears
Fell from his eyes and washed his rosy cheeks.
"Glad be the paladin's shrewd heart," he said,
"And may his spirit be the slave of justice.
Thy falchion scorcheth adamant, earth weepeth
When thou art fighting. Where thy charger pranceth
The lagging soldiers haste, and verily
Where heaven hath felt the storm-blast of thy mace
It dareth not array its host. All earth
Is verdant with thy justice, and the spirit V. 192
Of wisdom is a seedling of thy stock.
All joy in thy just dealing; earth and time

[1] Zál is regarded metaphorically as half bird. *Cf.* pp. 302, 304.

Receive it at thy hands. So do not I;
I have no share though thine acknowledged kinsman.
I am the dust-fed nursling of a bird
And know no feud with any, and no fault
To give occasion to an enemy
Save this, that Sám the hero is my sire
And mine accomplishment beneath such birth.
Or ever I was born thou didst expose me
Upon the mountains, harrowing my mother,
And giving to the flames a thriving child.
I saw no cradle and no breast of milk,
I had no memory of any kindred,
For thou didst cast me out, deprive my heart
Of peace and tenderness, and strive against
The Maker, for who maketh white and black?
Now since the Maker hath provided for me,
And looked upon me with a Master's eye,
Skill, manhood, and a hero's sword are mine
And one friend too, himself the crown of chiefs,
The brave, wise, prudent monarch of Kábul.
I sojourned at Kábul by thy command
And mindful of thy counsel and thy pledge.
Thou saidst: 'I ne'er will vex thee, but will bring
The tree that thou hast planted into fruit,'
Yet bringest this gift from Mázandarán,
And hastest from the Kargasárs to further
The ruin of my home: such is thy justice!
V. 193 Behold, I stand before thee and expose
My body to thy wrath. Saw me asunder,
But utter not a word against Kábul.
Do as thou wilt; the power is all thine own,
But mischief to Kábul is done to me."
The chief attended to Zál's words, then bowed
His head and answered:—"'Tis all true, and I
Have dealt with thee unjustly from the first

And given foes occasion to rejoice.
What thou hast asked me is thy heart's desire
And in thy trouble thou couldst find no rest;
Yet be not rash, let me despatch the business.
I will indite a letter to the Sháh
And send it by thy hand, my loving son!
The worldlord will not seek to do thee harm
When he shall see thy prowess and thy looks,
And I have wooed his heart and soul to justice.
If he shall aid us thou wilt be contented,
Because the lion always hath the power
To gain its ends, and everywhere alike
Can seize upon the quarry."
Thereupon
Zál kissed the ground with many a benison.

§ 20

How Zál went on a Mission to Minúchihr

Sám wrote at large and set forth every plea. V. 194
The letter opened with the praise of God,
Who is established in His seat for ever:—
"From Him are good and evil, life and death:
We all of us are slaves and God is One.
The process of the sky is over all
That He—the Lord of Saturn, Sun, and Moon—
Hath willed. His blessing be upon the Sháh—
In fight an antidote-consuming bane,
In feast a moon that lighteneth the world—
Who brandisheth the mace, who stormeth cities,
Who giveth unto each his meed of joy,
Who marcheth with the flag of Farídún
To war, and slayeth haughty warrior-leopards.
The lofty mountain shattered by thy mace
Becometh dust upon thy proud steed's hoofs,

While thy pure heart and stainless Faith constrain
Both wolf and sheep to water at thy cistern.
A slave am I whose race is run, a slave
Who hath attained to sixty years twice told.
My head is strewn with camphor-dust—a crown
That sun and moon have given me. I girt
My warrior-loins and slaved. I fought the warlocks.
None e'er saw[1] horseman rein his steed, fell chiefs,
Or wield a mace like me. My mighty mace
Eclipsed the warriors of Mázandarán.
Did naught beside exalt me over all—
There was a dragon haunting the Kashaf
And making earth afoam. It reached from city
To city and from hill to hill, the hearts
Of all were filled with panic: men kept watch
V. 195 Both night and day. That dragon cleared the sky
Of flying fowl and earth of beast of prey.
It scorched the vulture's feathers with its blast,
Set earth a-blazing where its venom fell,
Dragged from the water gruesome crocodiles,
And swiftly flying eagles from the air.
Men and four-footed beasts ceased from the land;
The whole world gave it room. So seeing that none
Dared to lay hand upon it, in God's strength
I banished terror from my heart, girt up
My loins in His exalted name, and rode
Mine elephantine steed. My saddle bore
Mine ox-head mace, upon mine arm I carried
My bow, and at my neck my shield. I went
Forth like a savage crocodile. My hand
Was keen, keen too the dragon's breath, and all
Farewelled me when they saw me wield my mace.
I came. The dragon seemed a lofty mountain
And trailed upon the ground its hairs like lassos.

[1] Reading with C.

Its tongue was like a tree-trunk charred, its jaws
Were open and were lying in my path.
Its eyes were like two cisterns full of blood.
It bellowed when it saw me and came on
In fury, seeming all afire, O Sháh!
Within. The world 'gan swim before mine eyes,
A black reek went up to the murky clouds,
Earth's surface shook beneath the bellowing,
The venom seemed to be a sea of Chín.
Then like a gallant warrior I roared
Against that dragon, as a lion roareth,
And tarried not, but fitted to my bow
A poplar arrow tipped with adamant
And shot it at the dragon's jaws, to pin
The tongue against the throat; the tongue lolled pinned;
The dragon was astound. Again I shot,
Again I pierced the mouth; the creature writhed.
I shot a third shaft right adown its jaws;
Its heart's blood spouted seething. When it closed
And pressed me hard I took mine ox-head mace V. 196
And in the strength of God, the Lord of all,
Urged on mine elephantine steed and smote
The dragon's head: thou wouldst have said that heaven
Rained mountains down thereon. I smashed the skull,
As it had been a mighty elephant's,
And venom poured forth like the river Nile.
So struck I that the dragon rose no more
While earth was levelled to the hills with brains.
Kashaf was flowing like a stream of gall
And all was peace. The mountain-tops were thronged
With folk who called down blessings on my head,
Because that dragon was a fearful bane.
On this account men called me 'One blow' Sám,
And all threw jewels o'er me. I departed
With all my shining body bare of mail;

My charger's armour dropped from him in pieces;
I sickened with the venom many days.
There was no harvest in those parts for years
Nor aught except the ashes of burnt thorns.
To tell my conflict with the dívs would make
The letter tedious, but in that and elsewhere
I trampled underfoot the heads of chieftains,
And wheresoe'er I rode my wind-foot charger
I cleared that region of the rending lion.
And now this many a year my saddle's back
Hath been my throne, my charger been mine earth.
My massive mace hath brought beneath thy sway
Mázandarán and all the Kargasárs;
I ne'er have asked for field or fell but sought
To make thee both victorious and happy.
V. 197 My neck and mace-blows are not what they were,
My breast and loins are bent; I used to throw
A lasso sixty cubits long, but now
Am bent by time and have resigned my duties
To Zál, as worthy of my mace and girdle.
Like me he will destroy thy foes and make
My heart glad with his prowess. He hath come
To ask the Sháh to grant his secret longing,
One excellent in God's sight, apart from Whom
There is no excellence. We have not moved
Therein as yet but wait the great king's will,
For slaves must not presume. My lord the Sháh,
The guardian of the world, hath surely heard
How once and publicly I promised Zál,
When I was bringing him from Mount Alburz,
Not to refuse him aught, and he hath come,
Besmeared with blood and dust, and bones in bits,
With his request. He said: ''Twere better far
To hang Ámul[1] than fall upon Kábul.'

[1] Minúchihr's capital.

But when a fowl-fed outcast on the mountains
Seeth in Kábulistán so bright a Moon—
A Cypress slim crowned with a rosary—
It is no wonder if he goeth mad,
Nor ought the Sháh to visit it upon him.
All pity him, his pangs of love are such!
His many undeserved afflictions borne
Evoked the promise that the Sháh hath heard,
And I have sent him with a heavy heart.
When he shall come before thy lofty throne
Do that which is most consonant with greatness;
There is not any need to teach thee wisdom.
Him and him only have I in the world
To share my sorrows or to succour me. V. 198
From Sám the son of Narímán be blessings
A thousand fold upon the king of kings
And on the lords."
When all things were prepared
Zál took the letter hastily, arose,
Went forth and mounted mid the blare of trumpets.
A troop of warriors went with him to court
At speed. Thus from Zábulistán[1] went he
While "One blow" Sám enjoyed his rosary.

§ 21

How Mihráb was Wroth with Síndukht

When these events[2] were bruited at Kábul
Mihráb in fury called Síndukht and vented
His rage against Rúdába on his wife.
He said: "The only course for me, since I
Must yield before the monarch of the world,

[1] So C. and P. V. apparently by oversight reads Kábulistán.

[2] *I.e.* the Sháh's wrath and his instructions to Sám to destroy Kábul.

Is to take thee with thy polluted child
And slay you shamefully and publicly.
Thereat perchance the Sháh will be appeased
And earth grow peaceful. Who within Kábul
Would dare to strive with Sám or feel his mace?"
Síndukht sank down before him and considered.
Then having hit on an expedient,
For she was shrewd and subtle, came before
The sunlike king with folded arms and said:—
V. 199 "Hear but one word from me, then do thy will.
If thou hast wealth to purchase life bestow it,
And know thou that this night is big with fate.
Yet though night seemeth long 'twill pass, and earth
Be like a signet-ring of Badakhshán."
Mihráb replied: "No old wives' tales to warriors!
Say what thou know'st and use all means for life,
Or else array thee in the robe of blood."
She said: "There is no need of that, great king!
But I must go to Sám to draw this sword
And to appeal to him in fitting terms,
For wisdom is the cook when speech is raw.
To labour for our lives is my part, thine
To find the presents and entrust to me
Thy hoarded wealth."
"Here is the key," he said,
"One must not always grieve at spending treasure.
Prepare slaves, horses, thrones, and casques to go.
We yet may save our country from the flames
To shine though faded now."
Síndukht replied:—
"If thou desirest life hold treasure cheap.
While I avert the danger thou must use
No harshness toward my child. My greatest care
Here is her life; give me a pledge for that.

I care not for myself; all my concern
And travail are for her."
She took his pledge,
Then boldly faced the danger, clad herself
All in brocade of gold with pearls and jewels
About her head, and from the treasury took
Three hundred thousand pieces as a largess.
They brought forth thirty steeds of Arab stock V. 200
Or Persian with their silvern equipage;
And sixty slaves with golden torques, each bearing
A golden goblet brimmed with camphor, musk,
Gold, turquoises, and jewels of all kinds;
One hundred female camels with red hair,
One hundred baggage-mules; a crown of jewels
Fit for a king, with armlets, torques, and earrings;
A throne of gold like heaven, all inlaid
With divers sorts of gems, the width thereof
Was twenty royal cubits and the height
The stature of a noble horseman; lastly
Four mighty Indian elephants to bring
Bales full of wearing-stuffs and carpeting.

§ 22

How Sám comforted Sindukht

The treasures having been despatched she mounted
In warrior-guise, swift as a lightning-flash,
Assumed a Rúman helm and rode a steed
As swift as wind, approached Sám's court unknown
And bade the officers announce her thus:—
"An envoy from Kábul hath come to seek
The mighty chief, the hero of Zábul,

Charged with a message from Mihráb to Sám,
The winner of the world."
The chamberlain
Went to tell Sám, who granted audience.
Síndukht dismounted, hasted to the chief
V. 201 And kissed the ground, with praises of the Sháh
And of the chief of paladins. The largess,
The slaves, the horses, and the elephants
Stretched from the gate two miles. She offered all
To Sám, who sat there dazed, like one bemused,
With folded arms and drooping head. He thought:—
"Come female envoys from so rich a country?
If I accept the Sháh will be displeased;
If I decline then Zál will be chagrined
And flap his wings about like the Símurgh."
He raised his head and said: "As for these goods,
These slaves and elephants caparisoned,
Go give them to Zál's treasurer as presents
Sent by the Beauty of Kábulistán."
Then fairy-faced Síndukht essayed to speak,
Rejoicing that her offerings were accepted
And all had ended well. Three of her handmaids,
With idol-faces, tall as cypresses
And fair as jasmine, bearing each a goblet
Which brimmed with pearls and rubies, poured them out
In one promiscuous shower before the chieftain.
This done and strangers gone she said to Sám:—
"Thy counsel maketh old folk young. Thou teachest
V. 202 The mighty wisdom, who through thee illume
The world. Thou hast sealed up the hand of ill
And opened with thy mace the way of God.
Mihráb, if any, was to blame, and he
Is weeping blood. What have our people done
That thou must raze Kábul? They only live

To do thy hest—slaves of the very dust
Upon thy feet. Fear Him who hath created
Both mind and might, bright Venus and the Sun.
He would not countenance such acts from thee:
Gird not thy loins for bloodshed."

Sám replied:—

"Come tell me what I ask and palter not.
Art thou the slave or consort of Mihráb,
Whose daughter Zál hath seen? Tell me that I
May judge her worthiness, her mind and temper,
Her face, hair, stature, looks, and understanding—
Whatever thou hast noted tell me all."

Síndukht replied to him: "O paladin,
The chief of paladins, the warriors' stay!
First swear an oath whereat the land shall quake
That thou wilt never injure me or mine.
I have a palace, wealth, and mighty kindred.
First reassure me and I will reply
In hope to win thy favour, and will send V. 203
Our hoarded treasures to Zábul."

Sám grasped
Her hand and took the oath, on hearing which,
And marking that his speech and pledge were frank,
She kissed the ground, then rose and told him all:
"My race is from Zahhák, O paladin!
Spouse to Mihráb, that ardent warrior,
Am I, and mother of moon-faced Rúdába,
Of her o'er whom Zál poureth out his soul.
We and our kin before all-holy God
Bless all night long the Sháh, and thee, and Zál.
I come to know thy will, and how thou holdest
Us in Kábul. If we be bad by race
And sinners all unfit for rule, behold!
I stand before thee sorrowing. Slay thou
Who should be slain and bind who should be bound,

But as for all the guiltless of Kábul
Burn not their hearts nor turn their days to darkness."
The paladin on hearing saw in her
A woman of counsel and of ardent soul,
With cheeks like spring, in height a cypress-tree,
With reed-like waist and pheasant's gait. He said:—
"My pledge shall hold although it cost my life.
Live safely and rejoicing at Kábul
With all thy kindred. I assent that Zál
Shall wed Rúdába. Though our race is other
Than yours, yet ye deserve the crown and throne;
The world so waggeth and no shame to us;
We cannot strive against the Almighty Maker,
Who doth whate'er He willeth in such wise
That we are ever crying out: 'Ah me!'
V. 204 One is exalted and another humbled,
And while one fareth well another quaketh.
The heart of one is furnished by his increase,
Another's minished by his poverty,
But after all the end of both is dust—
The element that slayeth every race.
I will exert myself on thy behalf
Because of thine appeal and bitter cry,
And have already written to the Sháh
A letter with the plaint of one in pain,
And Zál hath gone with it. Hath gone! nay rather
Hath flown! He saw no saddle when he mounted,
And then his roadster's hoofs saw not the ground!
The Sháh will smile and give a gracious answer,
For this bird's fosterling is out of heart;
He standeth in the mire made by his tears,
And if his sweetheart is as fond as he is
Their skins will never hold them. Prithee now
Let me behold the Dragon's child, just once,

On thine own terms. The sight may weigh with me
If both her looks and locks commend themselves."
She answered: "If the paladin will gladden
His slave, let him vouchsafe to visit her:
Her head will reach high heaven. If to Kábul
We bring a king like thee, we will present
Our lives as offerings."
She saw his smiles
And that all hate was rooted from his heart
As he replied: "Be not concerned; this matter
Will shortly turn out to thy wish."
Síndukht
Then asking leave withdrew, and went away
In full content, her cheeks like gems for joy.
She sent a lusty courier like wind V. 205
To tell Mihráb: "Be easy in thy mind,
Rejoice and make thee ready for a guest.
I follow quickly."
Next day, when the sun
Shot up and heads awoke from drowsiness,
Saluted as the Moon of noble dames,
Síndukht proceeded to the court of Sám,
Did him obeisance, spake with him at large,
And asked permission to go home rejoicing
To tell Mihráb about the new-made league,
And get all ready to receive their guest.
Sám said: "Depart and tell him everything."
They chose choice gifts for her and for Mihráb,
And for Rúdába too—that lovesome maid.
Sám gave Síndukht withal all that was his
Within Kábul of palaces and gardens,
Of tilth, milch cattle, carpets and apparel,
Then took her hand, re-swore his oath and said:—
"Be happy at Kábul, and fear no foe."

With favouring stars the pale Moon's face again
Grew bright, and she went homeward with her train.

§ 23

How Zál came to Minúchihr with Sám's Letter

Now hearken how Zál fared with Minúchihr—
V. 206 That favourite of fortune. News arrived:—
"Zál, son of Sám the cavalier, hath come."
The nobles went to welcome him. On reaching
The court he had an audience and did homage,
Remaining with his face upon the ground.
The kind Sháh's heart was won; he bade to purge
Zál's face of dust and sprinkle him with musk,
And, when the well-beloved approached the throne,
Inquired: "How didst thou fare mid wind and dust
On thy hard journey, child of paladins?"
Zál answered: "Through thy Grace 'twas more than well;
"Thou turnest every trouble to delight."
The Sháh then took Sám's letter, read and smiled.
"Thou hast increased an ancient grief of mine,"
He said, "yet for thy father's touching letter,
Which ancient Sám hath written in his trouble,
Although the matter hath much grieved my heart,
I am resolved to think of it no more,
And will perform and carry out thy wish,
Since that is all to thee; but tarry here
While I deliberate on thine affairs."
The cooks brought in a service all of gold
Whereat the king of kings sat down with Zál,
And ordered all the chieftains to partake
The feast. The eating done, they served the wine
Within another throne-room, and that over

Zál mounted on his charger with gold trappings,
And so departing passed the livelong night
With much to think and talk about. At dawn
He came with girded loins to Minúchihr
Of glorious Grace, who gave him salutation V. 207
And praised him privily when he had gone.
The Sháh commanded that the archimages,
The nobles, wise men, and astrologers,
Should meet at his high throne and read the stars.
They met and laboured for three days and then
Announced: "We have perused the circling sky,
And this is what the stars prognosticate:—
'No stagnant pool is here. There will arise
From Sám's son and the daughter of Mihráb
A hero full of prowess and fair fame.
His life will be prolonged for centuries;
He will have strength, renown, and Grace, pluck, brains,
And thews, and not a peer in fight or feast.
Where'er his charger's coat shall run with sweat
The liver of his foemen shall run dry.
The eagle will not soar above his helm;
Naught will he reck of chiefs and men of name.
He will be tall in stature, great in might,
Will take the lion with his twisted lasso,
Will roast whole onagers upon the fire,
Will make the air weep with his scimitar,
Will be the belted servant of the Sháhs
And shelter of the horsemen of Írán.'"
Then said the exalted Sháh: "Beware that ye
Disclose to none what ye have told to me."

[1] Reading with C.

§ 24

How the Archmages questioned Zál

V. 208 The Sháh called Zál to prove him by hard questions.
The shrewd archmages and the men of lore
Sat in full conclave, and examined him
On many matters veiled in mystery.
One asked that man of insight, wit, and knowledge:—
"What are the dozen cypresses erect
In all their bravery and loveliness,
Each one of them with thirty boughs bedeckt—
In Persia never more and never less?"
The second said: "O noble youth! explain—
What are those two steeds moving rapidly:
As crystal bright is this one of the twain
And that one sable as a pitchy sea;
They gallop at their utmost speed and strain
Each one to catch the other, but in vain?"
The third said thus: "What are the thirty men
Who ride before their king in order meet
And seem but twenty-nine to thee, but when
Thou countest them their number is complete?"
The fourth inquired: "What is the meadow-land,
Where streams abound and herbage groweth strong,
To which a fierce man cometh, in whose hand
There is a scythe, a sharp one and a long:
He cutteth all the grass both green and dry,
And if thou criest heareth not thy cry?"
"What are those cypresses—a lofty pair—
Like reeds above a sea whose waters heave,"
Another asked, "and what bird nesteth there
On this at morning, and on that at eve?
The bird departeth and the leaves turn pale,
The bird arriveth and they musk exhale.

In all their verdure both are never seen V. 209
Together, but one sere, the other green."
The sixth said: "On a mountain I descried
A city that was strongly fortified.
The citizens, those men exceeding wise,
Preferred thereto a thornbrake on the waste;
And there as monarchs or as subjects placed
A town with buildings lifted to the skies.
The memory of the city now hath gone,
'Tis not accounted of by any one;
But some day suddenly the earth will quake,
The country vanish from the sight of men,
Remembrance of the city will awake,
And long regret possess the citizen.
Now look behind the veil, explore the words,
And if thou canst the secret sense unfold,
Declare it here in presence of the lords,
And make the purest musk from grimy mould."

§ 25

How Zál answered the Archmages

Zál for a while remained absorbed in thought,
Then shook his plumage, spread his wings, and answered:—
"First as to those twelve cypresses which rear
Themselves, with thirty boughs upon each tree:
They are the twelve new moons of every year,
Like new-made monarchs, throned in majesty.
Upon the thirtieth day its course is done
For each; thus our revolving periods run.
Thou speakest of two chargers, black and white,
Which like Ázargashasp go flashing by:
These too are periods, and in their flight
Pursue each other unremittingly.

The two that pass along are night and day,
The pulses of the sky are reckoned so;
They never catch each other as they go,
But follow as a hound pursueth prey.
V. 210 Again, thou askest of the thirty men
That ride before their king in order meet,
And seem to thee as twenty-nine, but when
Thou countest them their number is complete.
They are the phases of the moon; one night
A phase from time to time eludeth sight.
Unsheathe we now the hidden sense expressed
By two tall cypresses, a bird and nest.
The darker limb of heaven is opposed
With Aries to Libra in the height;
Thence till the reign of Pisces hath been closed
The ascendant limb is that of gloom and night.
Each lofty cypress-tree denoteth one
Of these two limbs which cause our smiles and tears,
The bird which flieth 'twixt them is the sun—
Occasion to the world of hopes and fears.[1]
Again, the city built upon the mount
Is our long home, the scene of our account.
This Wayside Inn is meant by Thornbrake town,
At once our pleasure, treasure, pain and woe:
It reckoneth each breath drawn here below
And both exalteth us and casteth down.

[1] Putting aside modern astronomical notions the idea seems somewhat as follows: the sky, as represented by the Signs of the Zodiac, is divided into a lighter and a darker portion or "limb"; the lighter, Spring and Summer, being represented by the Signs from Aries to Virgo; and the darker, Autumn and Winter, by those from Libra to Pisces. The "limbs" are alternately more or less in evidence, while the sun is continually journeying from one "limb" to the other. The double alternation of light and darkness is thus accounted for; that of the lighter and darker seasons of the year by the movements of the sky, and that of day and night by the movement of the sun. The former rules man's destiny, the latter chiefly influences his daily life.

A storm ariseth, earth's foundations quake,
Extorting from the world a bitter cry;
We leave our toils behind us in the brake
And seek the city that is built on high.
Where we have toiled another hath the gain,
But not for ever: he will not remain.
'Twas always so; to look for change is vain.
If our provision be an honoured name
Our souls will be on that account held dear,
But if we do the deeds of greed and shame V. 211
That will, when we have breathed our last, appear.
Albeit we have raised to Saturn here
Our mansion we shall have a shroud instead,
No more. The dust and bricks close o'er our head
And all is consternation, awe, and fear.
As for the meadow-land, and him whose keen
Scythe is a terror both to green and dry,
Who cutteth all alike, both dry and green,
And if thou criest heareth not thy cry—
Time is the mower; we are like the swath;
The grandsire and the grandson are the same
To him, not making young or old his aim,
But chasing each that cometh in his path.
The use and process of the world are so:
No mother's son is born unless for death.
By this door we arrive, by that we go,
And time meanwhile accounteth every breath."

§ 26

How Zál displayed his Accomplishment before Minúchihr

When Zál had thus expounded all the riddles
The company both wondered and rejoiced,
While Minúchihr, glad-hearted, cried: "Well done!"
He had forthwith a banquet-hall prepared,

As 'twere the moon at full, and there they quaffed
Wine till the night fell, and the revellers' heads
Became bemused. Then at the portal rose
Shouts for the steeds, and glorious in their cups
The warriors grasped hands and went their ways.
Now when the sunshine struck the mountain-tops
V 212 And when the chiefs awoke, Zál, ready-girt
And lion-like, approached the royal presence
For leave to hie him home, and thus he said:—
"My gracious lord! I long to see Sám's face.
Since I have kissed the footings of thy throne
Of ivory thy Grace and crown illume
My heart."
The Sháh said: "Youthful warrior!
Thou must bestow upon us still one day.
Thou yearnest for the daughter of Mihráb
And not for Sám."
He bade to carry gongs
With Indian bells and clarions to the ground,
And all the warriors went forth rejoicing
With lances, maces, and artillery.
They took their bows and poplar shafts and let
A mark stand for the foe. They wheeled and showed
Their horsemanship with mace, sword, shaft, and lance,
While from a height the Sháh, seen or unseen
By them, observed their skill, but never saw
Or heard of horsemanship like Zál's. There stood
Upon the ground an ancient tree. Zál took
His bow, urged on his steed, and raised his name
By striking that tall tree and piercing it
Full in the centre with the royal shaft.
Then certain of the javelin-men took bucklers
And exercised with double-headed darts.
Zál bade his Turkman slave bring shields of hide,
Drew himself up and urged his steed along,

Then dropped his bow, took his own javelin
And made new sport. He struck and pierced three shields
And flung them to one side in high disdain.
The Sháh said to the chiefs: "What mighty man V. 213
Will challenge him to prove his weight in combat?
He hath knocked dust out of two-headed darts
And arrows."
Then the warriors donned their mail
With wrathful hearts and curses on their tongues.
They pricked forth to the combat bearing spears
With heads of tempered steel. Zál urged his steed,
Made the dust fly, and, when the battle joined,
Selected from the rest a cavalier
Of fame and high estate at whom he charged.
The warrior turned and fled. Zál, leopard-like,
Emerging from the dust, seized on his belt
And took him from his saddle with such ease
That both the Sháh and army were astound,
The chiefs exclaiming: "None will see his peer."
The Sháh said: "May he ever be thus ardent.
The mother of the man that dareth him
To battle will wear mourning for her son.
The lionesses bear not one so brave,
So brave . . . he must be classed with crocodiles!
And Sám is blessed indeed to leave the world
Such a memorial."
He praised the youth,
As did the famous warriors. Then they went,
With girded loins and casques upon their heads,
Toward the palace where the Sháh prepared
A robe of honour that astonished all
The chieftains, with a precious crown and throne
Of gold, with armlets, torques, and golden girdles,
Rich robes, slaves, steeds, and other things of worth,
And gave the whole to Zál, who kissed the earth.

§ 27

Minúchihr's Answer to Sám's Letter

The Sháh then wrote a very gracious letter
To Sám: "Renowned and valiant paladin,
In all emprise victorious like a lion,
And peerless in the sight of turning heaven
For feast, for fight, for counsel and for favour!
That glorious son of thine—brave Zál—at whom
The lion is aghast in battle-tide,
The brave accomplished warrior and horseman
Of lasting fame, hath come, and I, on learning
Thy wishes and his longings, granted him
All his desires, and count upon his having
A long and glorious life. Should leopard-hunters
Have other issue than the strong-clawed lion?"
Exalted o'er the rest and in high favour
Zál sent to Sám to say: "I left the Sháh
With all that I could wish—a royal robe
Of honour, crowns, torques, armlets, and a throne
Of ivory, and am coming with all speed,
My loving, glorious sire!"
Sám gladdened so
That his hoar head grew young. He hurried off
A horseman to Kábul to tell Mihráb
The kindness of the Sháh which had produced
Such joy, and added: "After Zál's return
We will set out to pay thee our respects."
The messenger sped forth. Mihráb on hearing
So joyed to make Kábul's Sun his affine
That through his joy the dead returned to life
And agèd heads grew young. They summoned minstrels,
And one had said that all poured out their souls.

With smiling lips and joyful heart he called
High-born Síndukht and beaming said to her:—
"My consort, whose advice is prosperous!
Thy counsel hath illumed our gloomy dwelling.
Thou hast laid hand upon a sprout whereto
The monarchs of the world will do obeisance.
Since thou hast ordered matters from the first
Thine be it also to accomplish them.
My treasury is all at thy disposal
For what is needed—throne, or crown, or wealth."
Síndukht on this withdrew and gave her daughter
The news, and joyful hopes of seeing Zál.
She said: "Thy choice of partner is most fit,
And men and women, howsoever strict,
Will see good cause to let their strictures cease.
Thou hast sped quickly to thy heart's desire."
Rúdába answered: "Consort of the king!
Thou meritest the praise of every one.
I make the dust upon thy feet my pillow,
And order my religion by thy teaching.
May eyes of Áhrimans be far from thee,
And be thy heart and soul the house of feasting."
Síndukht on hearing this bedecked the palace,
Arrayed the hall like jocund Paradise, V. 216
Mixed wine and musk and ambergris and spread
Gold-broidered carpets, some inwoven with emeralds
And others patterned out in lustrous pearls;
Each several pearl was like a water-drop.
She placed a golden throne within the hall,
So do they use in Chín. The tracery
Was all of gems with carvings interspersed,
The feet were jewelled: 'twas a royal throne
And very splendid. She arrayed Rúdába
Like Paradise, wrote on her many a charm
And seated her, allowing none to enter

Within that chamber arabesqued with gold.[1]
Kábulistán was dight in festal trim,
All colour, scent, and wealth. They housed the backs
Of the elephants with rich brocade of Rúm
And seated on them minstrels wearing crowns.
All was prepared for welcoming the guests
And all the slaves were summoned to strew musk
And spicery, to put down furs and silks,
To fling down gold and musk, and sprinkle round
Wine and rose-water on the dusty ground.

§ 28

How Zál came to Sám.

Zál sped like bird on wing or ship at sea
And all that heard of his approach went out
To welcome him with joy. The palace rang
With shouts: "Zál hath succeeded and returned."
Sám met him joyfully and held him close
V. 217 Embraced. When Zál had disengaged himself
He kissed the ground and told his news. Anon
Sám, seated on his splendid throne with Zál,
Blithe-hearted and in great content, began
To tell about the matter of Síndukht,
And kept his countenance: "A woman named
Síndukht brought me a message from Kábul,
And made me promise not to be her foe.
I granted all that she was pleased to ask—
First that the future monarch of Zábul
Shall have the Beauty of Kábul to wife,
And next that we will go and be her guests
To heal all sores. Now she hath sent to say:—

[1] Where she had once entertained Zál.

'All things are ready, scented and adorned.'
What answer shall we send high-born Mihráb?"
Then Zál blushed ruby-red from head to foot
With sudden joy, and said: "O paladin!
If it seem good to thee send on the troops
And let us follow and discuss the matter."
Sám smiled at Zál, aware of his desire,
For he could talk of nothing but Rúdába,
And got no sleep at nights for thinking of her.
Sám bade to sound the gongs and Indian bells
And have prepared the royal tent-enclosure.
He sent a cameleer, a valiant man,
To advertise the lion-like Mihráb:—
"The chieftain is upon his way with Zál
And elephants and troops escorting them."
He went with speed and told Mihráb, who joyed; V. 218
His cheeks grew ruddy as the cercis-bloom.
He sounded trumpets, mounted kettledrums,
And furnished forth his army like the eye
Of chanticleer. Huge elephants and minstrels
Made earth a Paradise from end to end.
What with the many flags of painted silk
Of divers colours, sound of pipes and harps,
The blast of trumpets and the din of gongs,
One would have said: "It is a festival,
The Resurrection or the Last Great Day."
Thus went Mihráb till he encountered Sám,
He then dismounted and approached on foot.
That paladin of paladins embraced him
And asked if all were well. Mihráb began
To compliment both Sám and Zál, then like
The new moon rising o'er the mountain-tops
He mounted his fleet steed and set a crown
Of gold and jewels on the head of Zál.
Conversing of the past they reached Kábul.

What with the clang of Indian bells, the sounds
Of lyre and harp and pipe, one would have said:—
"The roofs and doors make music. Times are changed!"
The horses' manes and forelocks ran with saffron
And musk. Then with three hundred female slaves
With girded loins, each with a cup of gold
Which brimmed with musk and gems, Síndukht approached,
And all blessed Sám and showered forth the jewels.
Each person present on that happy day
V. 219 Had treasure to the full. Sám smiled and asked:—
"How long wilt thou conceal Rúdába thus?"
Síndukht replied: "If thou wouldst see the Sun
What is my fee?"
Sám answered: "What thou wilt:
My treasures, crown, throne, country—all are thine."
They sought the chamber arabesqued with gold,
Where all was jocund Spring, and Sám, entranced,
Struck dumb, and dazzled, viewed the moon-faced maid.
At last he said to Zál: "Thou lucky youth!
God greatly helped thee when this glorious Sun
Set her affections on thy face. Thy Choice
Is choice indeed!"
By Sám's desire Mihráb
Approached to execute the legal contract.
They placed the happy couple on one throne
And scattered emeralds and carnelians.
Her coronet was wrought of gold and his
Of royal gems. Mihráb produced and read
The inventory of his daughter's dowry
Till one had cried: "'Tis more than ear can hear."
Sám was confounded when he realised
The treasures, and invoked the name of God.
Then hall and city revelled for a week,
The palace was a Paradise in raptures,

And neither Zál nor coral-lipped Rúdába V. 220
Slept for a sennight either day or night;
Then going to the palace from the hall
They spent three weeks in joy, while all the nobles
With armlets on stood ranked outside. One month
Elapsed and Sám departed to Sístán.
Zál spent a happy week in getting ready
Steeds, howdahs, litters; for Rúdába's use
A curtained couch. Síndukht, Mihráb, and all
Their kin set off first for Sístán, glad-hearted,
With minds at ease and lips all praise to God,
Who giveth good, and there arrived triumphant,
Illuminating earth with joy and laughter.
Sám had a feast prepared. Three days were spent
In revelling, then while Síndukht remained
Mihráb returned attended to Kábul,
While Sám gave up the realm to Zál and led
His army westward 'gainst the Kargasárs,
With flaunting flag and favouring auguries.
"I go," said he, "because those fields are mine,
Though not men's hearts and eyes. I have the patent
From Minúchihr. 'Have and enjoy,' he said.
I fear me that the miscreants will rebel, V. 221
The dívs above all of Mázandarán.
I give to thee, O Zál! this state, this realm,
And glorious crown."
Sám of the single blow
Departed, leaving Zál upon the throne,
A happy husband holding festivals,
And when Rúdába sat beside her spouse
He placed a crown of gold upon her brows.

§ 29

The Story of the Birth of Rustam

Ere long the noble Cypress was in bearing,
Delightsome Spring grew sere, her heart was sad,
She wept blood for the burden that she bore.
Gone was her cercis-bloom, her cheeks were saffron.
Síndukht said unto her: "Life of thy mother!
Why hast thou grown so wan?"
Rúdába answered:—
"By night and day I cry for help. I lie
Sleepless and withered like a living corpse.
My time hath come but not deliverance."
Until that came she lacked both rest and sleep.
One would have said: "Her skin is stuffed with stones
Or iron." Now one day she swooned, and shrieks
Rose from the halls of Zál. Síndukht bewailed,
V. 222 Plucked out her raven tresses musk-perfumed
And tore her face. Then one announced to Zál:—
"The leaves have withered on thy lofty Cypress,"
And he with tearful cheeks and stricken heart
Approached the couch whereon Rúdába lay.
The female slaves were tearing out their hair
Unveiled with tearful faces. Then occurred
A thought to Zál which eased him of his anguish—
The plume of the Símurgh.[1] He smiling told
Síndukht, then brought a censer, kindled fire
And burnt some of the plume. The air grew dark
And that imperious bird swooped down—a Cloud
Whose drops were pearls . . . pearls, say I, rather peace.
Zál did obeisance long and praised her much.
She thus addressed him: "Wherefore is this grief,
This moisture in the mighty Lion's eye?

[1] *Cf.* pp. 235, 246.

From this moon-faced and silver-bosomed Cypress
Will come a noble babe. The mighty lion
Will kiss the dust upon his feet. No cloud
Will dare to pass above him. When he shouteth
The pard will split its skin and gnaw its paws.
The warriors that see his whizzing mace,
His chest, his arms and neck, will hear his voice
With quaking hearts, steel-eaters though they be
And gallant fighters; for this child will prove
In counsels and in rede a weighty Sám,
In height a cypress-tree, in wrath a lion,
In strength an elephant, and fillip bricks
Two miles. His birth will not be natural, V. 223
So willeth He who giveth good. Bring thou
A blue-steel dagger, seek a cunning man,
Bemuse the lady first with wine to ease
Her pain and fear, then let him ply his craft
And take the Lion from its lair by piercing
Her waist while all unconscious, thus imbruing
Her side in blood, and then stitch up the gash.
Put trouble, care, and fear aside, and bruise
With milk and musk a herb that I will show thee
And dry them in the shade. Dress and anoint
Rúdába's wound and watch her come to life.
Rub o'er the wound my plume, its gracious shade
Will prove a blessing. Let this gladden thee.
Then go before the Lord who hath bestowed
This royal Tree which ever blossometh
Good fortune. Be not troubled for this matter,
Because thy fertile Bough will yield thee fruit."
She spake, and plucking from her wing a plume
Dropped it and flew aloft. Zál picked it up
And did, O marvel! as the bird had said,
While every one looked on amazedly
With wounded spirit and with bloodshot eyes.

Síndukht wept tears of blood in torrents, asking:—
"How shall the infant come forth through the side?"
There came an archimage, one deft of hand,
Who made the moon-faced dame bemused with wine,
V. 224 Then pierced her side while she was all unconscious,
And having turned the infant's head aright
Delivered her uninjured. None had seen
A thing so strange. The babe was like a lion,
A hero tall and fair to look upon.
Both men and women wondered at him, none
Had heard of such an elephantine child.
A day and night the mother lay asleep,
Bemused, unconscious. They the while sewed up
The wound and eased the anguish with the dressing.
When she awoke and whispered to Síndukht
They showered gold and jewels over her
And praised the Almighty. Then they brought the babe
To her, extolling him as heavenly.
The first day thou hadst called him twelve months old—
A very heap of lilies mixed with tulips.
The lofty Cypress smiled upon the babe,
Perceived in him the Grace of king of kings,
And, "I am magnified," she said, "and grief
Is over."
So they named the infant "Rustam."[1]
They made of silk a herolet the size
Of that unsuckled Lion, stuffing it
With sable's hair and limning Sol and Venus
Upon the cheeks, with dragons on the arms,
And on the hands a lion's claws. Beneath
The arm there was a spear, mace in one hand
And bridle in the other. They set the puppet
V. 225 Upon a chestnut horse with great attendance.

[1] The word in the Persian may also mean "Je suis délivrée" (Mohl), or "I bear fruit," lit., "There is fruit to me."

This done they sent on first a cameleer
Apace, showered drachms on those who were in charge,
And took the puppet mace in hand to Sám.
  In all the country round they held high revel,
The desert was supplied with pipe and wine.
Inside Kábul Mihráb enjoyed the tidings
And showered dínárs upon the mendicants,
While in Zábul the revellers sat together
Without distinction as to high and low,
But mixed like warp and woof.
  They brought the puppet
To Sám the cavalier, who looked thereon,
Grew glad and well content. That hero's hair
Stood up on end. "This silken thing," said he,
"Is just like me. If he is half this size
His head will touch the sky, his skirt the ground."
  He called the messenger and poured drachms o'er
    him
Until the heap was level with his head.
The drums beat in the court for joy, Sám decked
The champaign like the eye of chanticleer
And bade adorn the land of the Sagsárs
And all Mázandarán. He had wine brought, V. 226
Called minstrels and showered drachms on mendicants.
  A week passed and the famous chieftain wrote
A letter like the meads of Paradise
To Zál. He offered praises first to God
That matters had turned out so happily,
Praised Zál the lord of mace and scimitar,
Then coming to the effigy of silk,
Which had a hero's neck and Grace of kings,
Enjoined: "So cherish him that not a breath
May hurt him. I have prayed by day and night
In secret to Almighty God to show me
A son born of thy seed and of my type.

Now that the backs of both of us are straightened
We only need to pray that we may live."
Came like a rushing wind the messenger
To Zál of ardent and exulting heart,
Told him of Sám's delight and gave the letter.
As soon as Zál had heard those pleasant words,
Which caused the clear-brained hero added joy,
He raised his neck to touch the azure sky.
Thus went the world with Zál and showed its purpose.
Ten nurses suckled Rustam, for from milk
Are strength and constitution. Being weaned
He lived on bread and flesh. He ate as much
As five, and people turned from such repasts.
V. 227 When Rustam had attained the height of eight [1]
And grown a noble Cypress or bright Star—
A Star whereat the world was all agaze—
Thou wouldst have said: "'Tis valiant Sám indeed
In stature, wisdom, countenance, and rede."

§ 30

How Sám came to see Rustam

Sám heard: "The son of Zál is like a lion,
None ever saw a child so fierce and stalwart."
His heart was stirred in him, and he resolved
Himself to see the boy. He left in charge
The captain of the host and went with escort,
Drawn by his love, toward Zábulistán.
Then earth grew ebon, for Zál heard the news,
Bound on the drums and went with brave Mihráb
To welcome Sám. When Zál had dropped the ball
Shouts of departure rose on every side.

[1] Firdausí does not specify the measure. Mohl translates "huit *palmes*."

The mass of men stretched out from hill to hill,
With buckler after buckler red and yellow.
Then trumpeted the elephant and neighed
The Arab steed, five miles that din resounded.
They had one mighty elephant caparisoned
And furnished with a golden throne, whereon
The son of Zál sat with his cypress-form,
And what a neck and shoulders! crowned and girt,
With bow and shafts in hand, and shield before him.
Sám saw and ranked his troops upon each side. V. 228
Mihráb and Sám dismounted, and the elders
Fell prostrate, calling blessings down on Sám,
Whose face bloomed like a rose. With gladdened heart
He smiled to see the child so strongly built—
A lion's whelp upon an elephant.
He had them brought just as they were, surveyed
The boy thus crowned and throned, and blessed him, saying:—
"Live long and happily, thou matchless Lion."
Then Rustam kissed Sám's throne and, wonderful
To tell! saluted him in this new fashion:—
"Great paladin! rejoice. I am thine offshoot:
Be thou my root. The slave of Sám am I,
But am not one for banquet, dream, and ease,
I would have steed and saddle, mail and helm,
Despatch my compliments by bolt and arrow,
And by God's bidding trample on foes' heads.
My face is like to thine, so be my courage."
He lighted. Sám the chieftain grasped his hand
And kissed his head and eyes. Meanwhile the tymbals
And elephants were still. Then full of glee
And talk they all betook them to the palace V. 229
And revelled merrily on golden seats,
Thus resting for a month with harp and song.
Upon the throne there sat victorious Sám,

An eagle's feather drooping from his crown,
Flanked by his son and Rustam mace in hand,
On whom the grandsire gazed amazedly,
Invoked o'er him the name of God and thought:—
"With such a neck and arms, such thews and shoulders,
Such reed-like waist, such ample chest and breast,
Such thighs like those of mighty dromedaries,
Such lion's heart and lion-tiger might,
Such goodly features, neck, and Grace, he hath
No peer on earth," then said to Zál: "Although
Thou question back a hundred generations,
No one would know of babe delivered thus.
How could they do the thing successfully?
A thousand times may that Símurgh be blest
To whom God showed the way. Now let us revel
And put to flight with wine the soul of care,
For this world is a caravanserai,
Old guests depart and new ones take their places."
They put the wine about and grew bemused,
They drank the chieftain's health, then that of Zál.
Mihráb kept quaffing till he thought himself
The one man of the world. "I do not care
For Zál or Sám," he said, "Sháh, crown, or Grace.
I, Rustam, and my steed Shabdíz, and sword . . .
No cloud will dare to overshadow us.
I will revive the customs of Zahhák,
And make the dust beneath my feet pure musk.
V. 230 And now to find him arms."
He spake in jest,
And Zál and Sám were merry at his words.
Sám, when the month was o'er, one day at dawn
Returned to his own throne. He said to Zál:—
"My son! be just and loyal to the Sháhs,
Preferring wisdom over wealth, refraining
Thy hands from evil all thy years, and seeking

God's way from day to day. Know that in public
And private also 'tis the one thing needful
Because the world will not abide with any.
Observe my rede and walk in righteous ways.
My heart forebodeth that my time hath come."
He bade his children both farewell and said:—
"Forget not mine advice."
Then in the palace
The bells rang out, and on the elephants
The clarions blared, as with his gentle tongue
And kindly heart Sám journeyed toward the west.
His children bore him company three stages
With minds instructed and with tearful cheeks,
Then Sám went on while Zál marched to Sístán
And there in lion Rustam's company V. 231
Spent day and night in bout and revelry.

§ 31

How Rustam slew the White Elephant

It came to pass that as they spent a day
In revel in a garden with their friends,
While harp-strings ran the gamut of sweet sounds
And all the chiefs were one in merriment,
They quaffed red wine from crystal cups until
Their heads were dazed, and then Zál bade his son:—
"My child of sun-like Grace! make ready robes
Of honour for thy warriors, and steeds
For those of high degree."
So Rustam gave
Gold, many Arab steeds caparisoned
And other gifts, and all went richer home.
Zál, as his wont was, sought the bower, while Rustam
Reeled to his chamber, laid him down and slept.

Shouts rose outside his door: "The chief's white elephant
Hath broken loose, and folk are in its danger!"
He heard, and urged by hardihood ran forth,
Snatched up Sám's mace and made toward the street.
The keepers of the gate opposed him, saying:—
"We fear the chieftain, 'tis a darksome night,
V. 232 The elephant is loose! Who can approve
Thy going forth?"
Wroth at the speaker's words
The matchless Rustam smote him on the nape:
His head rolled from him. Rustam turned toward
The others but they fled the paladin,
Who boldly went up to the gate and smashed
The chains and bolts with blows that well befitted
One of such noble name, went forth like wind
With shouldered mace excitedly, approached
The mighty beast and roared out like the sea.
He looked and saw a Mountain bellowing,
The ground beneath it like a boiling pot,
Saw his own nobles fleeing in dismay,
Like sheep that spy a wolf, roared like a lion
And went courageously against the beast,
Which seeing him charged at him like a mountain
And reared its trunk to strike, but Rustam dealt it
A mace-blow on the head; the mountain-form
Stooped; Mount Bístún shook to its core and tumbled
At one blow vile and strengthless. Thus it fell,
That bellowing elephant, while matchless Rustam
Went lightly to his place again and slept.
Now when the sun ascended from the east,
Bright as the cheeks of those who ravish hearts,
Zál heard of Rustam's deeds, how he had knocked
The dust out of the roaring elephant,
Had with a single mace-blow broken its neck

And cast its body to the ground. He cried:—
"Woe for that mighty elephant, which used
To bellow like the dark blue sea! How often
Hath that strong beast charged and o'erthrown a host, V. 233
Yet conquer howsoe'er it might in battle
My son hath bested it!"
He summoned Rustam,
Kissed him upon his head and hands and neck,
And said: "O lion's whelp! thy claws have grown
And thou art brave indeed! Youth as thou art
Thou hast no peer in stature, Grace, and valour;
So ere thy spreading fame shall thwart thine action
Take vengeance for the blood of Narímán.
Speed forth to Mount Sipand where thou wilt see
A cloud-capt stronghold four leagues square, whereover
The eagle hath not soared. 'Tis full of herbage
And water, gold and money, men and beasts.
Both trees and husbandmen abound there; none
Hath seen a place like that. The All-Provider
Hath furnished workmen of all sorts, and fruit-trees.
There is but one approach; 'tis through a gate
As high as heaven, and Narímán, who bore
The ball from all the chiefs, approached the stronghold
By order of Sháh Farídún and held
The road. The siege went on both night and day
With stratagems and spells above a year,
Until the foe hurled down a rock and earth
Possessed the paladin no more. The host
Retreated to the Sháh. When Sám was told:— V. 234
'The valiant Lion hath had fight enough,'
He wailed with growing grief, and having mourned
A week in anguish called the host together.
He marched against that hold with troops that covered
The waste and desert, and for months and years
Beleaguered it in vain. None issued forth

And none went in, but though the gate was shut
So long the foe lacked not a stalk of hay,
And Sám forewent his vengeance in despair.
Now is the time, my son! for artifice.
Go with a caravan in merry pin,
So that the watchmen may not find thee out,
And when thou occupiest Mount Sipand
Destroy those evil-doers, root and stem.
Since thou art yet unknown thou mayst succeed."
Then Rustam answered: "I will do thy bidding
And soon provide a physic for the ache."
Said Zál to him: "My prudent son! give ear.
Don camel-drivers' clothes and from the plain
Fetch camels to make up a caravan.
Disguise thyself and carry naught but salt,
For that is precious there. The folk know nothing
Of greater value. Though the castle towereth
Above its gate they have no salt to eat,
So all will run to greet thee when they see
Loads of it coming unexpectedly."

§ 32

How Rustam went to Mount Sipand

Then Rustam made him ready for the fray,
V. 235 Concealed his mace within a load of salt
And took some wise and valiant men withal.
He hid the arms within the camels' loads
And merry at the artifice sped on
To Mount Sipand. When he arrived the watchman
Saw him and hastened to the castellan.
"A caravan," he said, "with many drivers
Hath come, and if my lord doth ask their business,
To me it seemeth that they carry salt."

The chief sent one in haste to learn their loading,
Who went like dust to Rustam and inquired:—
"O master of the caravan! inform me
What merchandise is hidden in thy packs,
That I may go and tell the castellan
And take his orders."
Rustam answered him:—
"Go to the noble castellan and say:
'They carry salt.'"
The messenger returned
And said: "They carry salt alone, my lord!"
The chief rose, glad and smiling, bade his men
Unbar the gate and let the strangers in.
So battle-loving Rustam with his folk
Approached the gate whence people hurried out
To welcome him. He kissed the ground before
The chieftain, paid him many compliments,
Gave him much salt and spake fair words all round. V. 236
The chieftain said to Rustam: "Live for ever.
Be as the sun and as the shining moon.
I both accept and thank thee, worthy youth!"
Young Rustam entered the bázár and took
His caravan. The people flocked about him;
One gave a robe, another gold and silver,
And chaffered with him unsuspectingly.
At night brave Rustam and his warriors,
Armed for the fray, made for the castellan,
Who strove against them, but the Matchless one
Struck him a mace-blow on the head, and buried
His head and crown in dust. The tidings spread,
The people hastened to oppose the foe,
Night gloomed, blades flashed, and earth was like the ruby.
What with the mellay and the waves of blood
One would have said: "A sunset sky hath fallen."

The peerless Rustam with his lasso, mace,
And sword destroyed the gallant foe; and when
The sun unveiled itself, and held the world
From earth to Pleiades, of all the garrison
Not one remained alive that was not wounded.
The brave Íránians entered every nook
And slaughtered all they found. The matchless Rustam
Saw in the citadel where room was scant
A building of hard stone with iron doors,
And having with his mace-blows shattered them
V. 237 He entered and beheld a lofty vault
Full of dínárs. Astonied at the sight
He bit his lip; then to his chiefs he said:—
"Who ever would have thought of such a thing?
Good sooth no gold remaineth in the mines,
Or any pearl or jewel in the sea;
They lie out-spread within this treasury."

§ 33

How Rustam wrote a Letter announcing his Victory to Zál

Then Rustam wrote his sire a full report
Of what had passed: "First blessing be on Him,
Who is the Lord of serpent, ant, and sun,
Of Venus, Mars, and Sol, and heaven above.
May He bless Zál, the hero of Zábul,
The peerless paladin, the warriors' shelter,
The Íránians' stay, who setteth up on high
The flag of Káwa, who enthroneth Sháhs,
Who taketh thrones, him whose commandment reacheth
To sun and moon.
I came to Mount Sipand
By thy behest, and what a mount was there!
'Twas like the sky. When I had reached its foot

There came a greeting from the castellan,
And though I did according to his bidding
All things turned out as I would have them be.
At night-time with my famous men of war V. 238
I gave scant respite to the garrison,
Who have been slain or maimed or have escaped
By throwing all their fighting-gear away.
There are in sooth five hundred thousand loads
Of silver ingots and of standard gold.
Of raiment, tapestries, and movables
No one could tell the total though he counted
For days and months. What would the paladin?
May his steps prosper, may his mind be bright."
The messenger came like a blast and gave
The letter to the paladin. That chieftain
Read and exclaimed: "Praise to those noble ones."
Thou wouldst have said: "The news will make him young."
He wrote a full reply, first praising God
And then proceeding thus: "I have perused
That tale of triumph and poured out my soul
In joy. Such fights become thee well, my son!
Who though a boy hast played the man, illumed
The soul of Narímán and burned his foes.
To carry off the spoil I have sent camels
By thousands. Having read this mount with speed;
Thine absence grieveth me. Pack all the best,
Then fire the hold in vengeance."
Rustam read
The letter well content, then chose the choicest V. 239
Among the signet-rings, swords, casques, and belts,
As well as pearls and jewels fit for kings,
And figured pieces of brocade of Chín,
And sent them to his sire. The caravan
Set forth while he set fire to Mount Sipand,

Whose reek rose skyward, then he turned away
Light-hearted and went home like rushing wind.
When Zál had heard: "The world-illuming chieftain
Hath come," the folk prepared to welcome him
And decorated all the streets and quarters.
Arose the din of brazen clarions,
Of cymbals, trumpets, and of Indian bells
As eager Rustam fared toward Zál's palace
And coming bowed to earth before his mother,
Who blessed his face and kissed his chest and shoulders,
While Zál the chief embraced his son and bade
A scattering of largess to be made.

§ 34

The Letter of Zál to Sám

The famous chief sent the good news to Sám,
With many gifts to him and every one.
Whenas the letter came to Sám his cheeks
Bloomed like a rose in his exceeding joy.
He made a feast like jocund spring, bestowed
V. 240 Upon the messenger a robe and steed,
And talked of Rustam much. He wrote to Zál:—
"It is not wonderful that lions' whelps
Prove brave. A clever archimage may take
One ere it suck and bring it up with men,
Yet will he fear it when its teeth have grown,
For though it never saw its mother's dugs
'Twill throw back to the instincts of its sire.
No wonder then that Rustam should inherit
Zál's prowess, and that Lions seek his aid
In times of enterprise."
He sealed the letter
And gave it to the messenger, who went

To Zál therewith clad in his robe of honour.
The paladin rejoiced at what that youth
Of tender years had done, and all the world
From earth to Aries had hopes in him.
Now will I speak once more of Minúchihr,
The kindly Sháh, who when his end drew near
Gave to his son these counsels: lend thine ear.

§ 35

Minúchihr's last Counsels to his Son

Now Minúchihr, twice sixty years being sped,
Prepared to pass, because the astrologers
Informed him that the royal Grace would fade:—
"Thy time for passing to the other world V. 241
Hath come, God grant thee a good place with Him.
Consider what behoveth to be done
And let not death surprise thee, so make ready
For yielding up thy body to the clay."
When he had heard the wise men's words he changed
The fashion of his court, told the archmages
And chiefs the secrets of his heart, then gave
Naudar much counsel, saying thus: "This throne
Is but a jest, a breath, no lasting thing
To set the heart upon. In six score years
Now passed I girt my loins for stress and travail
And used to find much pleasure and content
In labour at the bidding of the Sháh.
I girt me with the Grace of Farídún,
And by his counsels every loss proved gain.
I took on Salm and on the brutal Túr[1]
Due vengeance for my grandsire—great Íraj—

[1] Reading with C.

I cleansed the world of its iniquities
And built me many a city, many a fortress;
Yet thou mightst say that I had never seen
The world, such am I! and my tale of years
Is blank. A tree whose leaves and fruit are bitter,
Should it not rather die than still live on?
Now after I have borne such pain and travail
I leave the throne of kingship and the treasure
To thee. As Farídún once gave to me,
So give I thee, the crown worn by the Sháhs.
V. 242 Hard are the enterprises that confront thee,
Thou must be sometimes wolf and sometimes sheep.
The offspring of Pashang will be thy bane,
And from Túrán will be thy straitening.
When any question shall arise, my son!
Seek aid from Zál and Sám and this new Tree
Now burgeoning, sprung from the root of Zál.
He will tread down Túrán and take upon him
To avenge thee."
While he spake he wept. Naudar
Bewailed him bitterly, and thus the Sháh,
Free from disease, unvexed by any pains,
Closed with a last cold sigh his eyes and faded.
So passed that famous Sháh, well graced in all,
Whose tale is left as his memorial.

VIII

NAUDAR

HE REIGNED FOR SEVEN YEARS

ARGUMENT

Naudar rules oppressively and the people revolt, but Sám succeeds in restoring order. Pashang, the king of Túrán, however, takes the opportunity of the death of Minúchihr to send an army to invade Írán under the command of his son Afrásiyáb. The Íránians are defeated, and Naudar, with many of his chiefs, is taken prisoner. Afrásiyáb kills Naudar and assumes the crown of Írán. Ighríras, the brother of Afrásiyáb, traitorously releases the Íránian prisoners, the Íránians under Káran and Zál obtain independent successes over the Túránians, and Afrásiyáb puts his brother Ighríras to death.

NOTE

In this reign the connection between the Sháhnáma and the Vedas temporarily seems to be severed, and we are unable to trace the names of the principal heroes further back than the Zandavasta, where most of them are to be found. The story of the reign is one of disaster for Írán; and the ancient feud, originating in the murder of Íraj, receives a new impetus through the execution of Ighríras by his brother Afrásiyáb. We are accordingly here introduced to the royal line of Túrán, of which we have heard nothing since the slaying of Túr by Minúchihr, and to its collateral branch, the heroic family of Wísa, which plays such an important part in this and future reigns, and corresponds on the Túránian side to the family of Sám on the Íránian.[1] The most important personality is that of Afrásiyáb—

[1] We learn from the Bundahish that Wisa and Pashang, Afrásiyáb's father, were brothers. WPT, i. 135.

the protagonist of the Túránian race, and the arch-enemy of Írán, through the reigns of successive Sháhs. He is the second in the trinity of evil spirits which, according to Zoroastrian belief, was created by Áhriman to vex the Íránian race, the first being Zahhák, and the third apparently Alexander the Great.[1] In the part of the extant Zandavasta known as the Zamyád Yast, which has been termed "an abridged Sháhnáma,"[2] Afrásiyáb, or Frangrasyan, as he is there called, is described as making several attempts to seize the kingly Glory or Grace which was the peculiar possession of the Sháhs, and which Zahhák himself sought in vain. Afrásiyáb, however, is recorded to have been once successful, not, as one might suppose, on the occasion in the present reign, but in that of Kai Káús, when the latter was taken prisoner by the king of Hámávarán.[3] In the Bundahish we find indications that Afrásiyáb was originally, like Zahhák, a water-stealing fiend; but he cannot be traced further back than the Zandavasta, and his depredations are confined to stealing away the rivers of Írán.[4] It is recognised in the Zandavasta that there are good men in all countries, in those of the elder sons of Farídún—Túrán and Rúm—as well as in that of his youngest-born—Írán.[5] We have an instance of this in the case of Ighríras—the brother of Afrásiyáb—who being originally a good spirit or demi-god is naturally supposed to favour the Íránians at the cost of his own countrymen, and is held up as a sort of martyr in the poem. In the Zandavasta the murder of Ighríras is looked upon as one of the motives for vengeance on Afrásiyáb,[6] while in the Bundahish we read: "When Frásíyáv made Mánúskíhar, with the Íránians, captive in the mountain-range of Padashkhvár, *and* scattered ruin *and* want among them, Aghréra*d* begged a favour of God, and he obtained the benefit that the army and champions of the Íránians were saved by him from that distress. Frásíyáv slew Aghréra*d* for that fault."[7] The story in the Sháhnáma is told not of Minúchihr but of Naudar. The mountain-range is that to the south of the Caspian.

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[1] DZA, i. xlviii.

[2] *Id.* ii. 286.

[3] The reign of Kai Káús will appear in Vol. II. of this translation, where see Part II.

[4] WPT, i. 82, 84.

[5] DZA, ii. 226.

[6] DZA, ii. 114.

[7] WPT, i. 135.

§ 1

How Naudar succeeded to the Throne

The mourning over, Sháh Naudar exalted V. 243
His royal crown o'er Saturn and gave audience
Upon the throne of Minúchihr, bestowing
Drachms and dínárs upon the troops. The nobles
Did reverence with their faces in the dust,
And said: "We are the bondslaves of the Sháh,
Our eyes and hearts are full of love for thee."
But matters changed, the monarch proved unjust,
Laments went up on all sides, and men's heads
Were whitened by the Sháh. He blotted out
The customs of his sire and grew severe
To chief and archimage, spurned gracious ways
And was enslaved to pelf. The peasants rose, V. 244
Bold spirits claimed the realm, and tumults followed.
The unjust Sháh in terror wrote to Sám,
Then at Sagsár within Mázandarán,
And first invoked the Maker of the world,
The Lord of Venus, Mars, and Sol, who made
Both ant and elephant: "Naught is beyond
His power, or too minute for His regard.
Now may the Master of the sun and moon
Have mercy on the soul of Minúchihr,
The Sháh, through whom the glorious crown grew bright,
My predecessor on so great a throne;
And may as many blessings light on Sám,
The hero, as the clouds shed drops of rain;
May that redoubted glorious chief be sound
In heart and mind, and sorrowless in soul.
The paladin of earth should know, I ween,

All matters close or open. Minúchihr,
Before he closed his eyes, spake much of Sám,
And I too have a warm supporter in him,
Who—paladin and favourite—watched over
My father's realm, illuming throne and crown.
Now things have reached this pass that save thou takest
Thy vengeful mace the throne will be abolished."
Whenas the letter came Sám sighed. At cockcrow
The sound of tymbals rose within the court,
And from the Kargasárs he marched a host
Such that the green sea had been lost therein.
V. 245 The magnates in Írán went out to meet
The approaching troops, dismounted when near Sám,
And spake with him at large of all the actions
Done by Naudar, and how he was unjust
And left his father's footsteps recklessly.
"He hath made earth a desert," they protested,
"His fortune that was wakeful is asleep.
He walketh not in wisdom's way, the Grace
Of God hath left him. How would it be if Sám
With his shrewd mind were seated on the throne?
His fortune would regenerate the world,
The country and its throne would both be his.
We all would serve him and would pledge our lives
For fealty to him."
But Sám replied:—
"Would God approve? Naudar hath royal blood
And sitteth belted on the royal seat.
Could I lay hands upon the realm and crown?
Impossible! One should not hear such words.
Would any chief dare say this publicly?
If but a daughter of Sháh Minúchihr
Sat crowned upon the golden throne the dust
Would be my couch whence I should joy to gaze

Upon her. If Naudar hath left the way
Trod by his sire it hath not been for long,
The iron is not so rust-eaten yet V. 246
As to be hard to furbish. I will bring
The Grace back and make all desire his love.
The dust of Minúchihr shall be my throne,
The print of his son's horseshoe be my crown.
We will speak much with him, and by our counsel
Bring him good fortune. Ye! repent yourselves
Of what hath passed and tender fresh allegiance.
Unless Almighty God and Sháh Naudar
Shall pardon you, the Sháh's wrath is your portion
On earth, and fire your dwelling-place hereafter."
The chiefs repented and made fealty
Afresh; that prosperous-footed paladin
Made earth grow young throughout. When Sám had reached
The presence of the Sháh he kissed the ground.
The Sháh descended from the throne, embraced
His captain, seating him upon the throne
With greetings and unbounded compliments.
They feasted for a week with harp and wine, V. 247
All offered their excuses to Naudar,
And bare themselves as subjects. From each province
Came tax and tribute out of fear of Sám,
The swift of wrath. Naudar sat on the throne
In splendour and in undisturbed repose,
Till in the presence the chief paladin
Arose and asked permission to depart,
Threw wide the door of counsel to the Sháh
And told again the goodly histories
Of glorious Farídún and Sháh Húshang
And Minúchihr, the lustre of the throne,
And how they ruled earth justly and gave alms
And would not countenance iniquity.

Sám brought the monarch's wayward heart to reason,
Warmed the chiefs' hearts toward him, rendering
All justice and injustice at his hands
Acceptable, and having said his say
Both to the nobles and their sovereign
Went with a robe of honour from Naudar,
With crown and throne and signet-ring and slaves,
With steeds whose furniture was wrought of gold
And two gold goblets all a-brim with rubies.
V. 248 So matters stayed awhile, but heaven above
Revolved not o'er Naudar in peace and love.

§ 2

How Pashang heard of the Death of Minúchihr

News of Sháh Minúchihr's decease, and how
Things fared ill with Naudar, came to Túrán,
Whose folk held commune with the malcontents.
Pashang, the Turkman ruler, also heard
And contemplated war. He spake at large
About his sire Zádsham, talked big of Túr,
The throne of Minúchihr, his troops, his warriors,
His princes and his realm, then summoned all
The captains and grandees, as Ighríras,
Bármán, and Garsíwaz, that raging Lion
Kulbád, and generals like skilful Wísa,
The leader of the host. He also called
His son Afrásiyáb, who came in haste,
To whom he said concerning Salm and Túr:—
"We may not hide revenge beneath our skirt,
For all whose brains are level in their heads
Knowhow the Íránians have entreated us,
And always girded up their loins for ill.
Now is the time for action and revenge,

The time to wash the blood-tears from our cheeks.
What say ye now? What answer do ye make?
Advise me well."
His words inspired Afrásiyáb
With zeal, he bragged before his sire with loins V. 249
Girt up and vengeance in his heart: "To fight
With Lions is my work, I match myself
Against Naudar, and if Zádsham had warred
He had not left the world in such ill plight,
But had become the master of Írán.
Now whatsoe'er my grandsire left undone
Of vengeance-seeking, fight, and stratagem,
Is left for my sharp sword to execute.
The time of turmoil is the time for me."
Pashang grew keen for battle as he marked
The lofty stature of Afrásiyáb,
His elephantine might, his breast and arms
So lion-like, his shadow stretching miles,
His tongue a trenchant scimitar, his heart
An ocean and his hand a raining cloud.
Pashang commanded him to draw the sword
Of war, and lead an army to Írán.
A chief whose son is worthy of his name
May raise his own head to the orb of day,
For afterwards, when he hath passed away,
The son will keep alive the father's fame.
Afrásiyáb, high-wrought and full of vengeance,
Went forth and opening the treasury
Abundantly equipped his warriors;
But when all things were ready, Ighríras
The counsellor, heart-musing, sought his sire,
For thinking is the business of the heart,
And spake on this wise: "Mine experienced father,
The highest of the Turkman race in valour!
Although Írán hath now no Minúchihr, V. 25

Sám, son of Narímán, is general;
There are besides Kishwád, the brave Káran,
And other men of name among the folk.
Thou know'st what Salm and valiant Túr endured
Through that old wolf and sworder Minúchihr,
And yet Zádsham, my grandsire and our king,
Whose helmet touched the circle of the moon,
Ne'er spake a word of such a war, or read
The book of vengeance in the time of peace.
'Tis better for us to restrain ourselves,
Because this madness will confound the realm."
Pashang said: "That brave crocodile, Afrásiyáb,
Is as a lion on a hunting-day,
An elephant of war in battle-tide.
Call him a bastard that would not avenge
His grandsire's wrongs. Depart forthwith and counsel
Afrásiyáb in matters great and small.
So when the crumple-skirted clouds are gone,
When rains have drenched the wastes, when hill and plain
Give pasture for the steeds, when herbage riseth
Above our warriors' necks and all the world
Is green with corn, then camp upon the plain;
Midst rose and verdure bear a gladsome heart,
And lead the whole host onward to Ámul;
Tread Dahistán beneath the horses' hoofs,
Speed and incarnadine the streams with blood.
Thence Minúchihr departed to the war
To take revenge on Túr, thence did his powers
Advance against us like a murky cloud,
And by that token it is your turn now
To send the dust up from their nobles' heads.
The refuge of the army of Írán
Was Minúchihr, and he adorned the throne.
V 251 Why fear the Íránians now that he is gone?

They are not worth a pinch of dust. I fear not
Naudar, who is but young and raw. Káran
Will be your foe, and one more warrior—
Garshásp. May ye so treat them on the field
As to rejoice our fathers' souls, and burn
Our foemen's hearts."
The prince said: "Blood shall run
Along in streams ere my revenge is done."

§ 3

How Afrásiyáb came to the Land of Írán

When herbage made the plain like painted silk
The warriors of Túrán girt up their loins;
An army marched forth from Túrán and Chín
With mace-men from the Western lands—a host
Without a middle or an end; withal
The fortune of Naudar was young no longer.
As these approached Jíhún he heard the news
And drew forth to the plain toward Dahistán.
Káran, who loved the fray, was general,
Behind him came Naudar, the king of kings,
And all the world was filled with bruit of warfare.
The host approaching Dahistán concealed
The sun in dust. They pitched the camp-enclosure
Of Sháh Naudar before the hold. Brief respite V. 252
Was theirs, because Afrásiyáb, who then
Was in Irmán, sent thirty thousand warriors,
With Shamásás and Khazarwán as leaders,
Toward Zábul to take revenge on Zál,
For "Sám," they heard, "is dead, and Zál is busied
About the obsequies."
Afrásiyáb
Was pleased, perceived that fortune was awake,
Marched forth to Dahistán, and pitched against it.

Who knoweth how to reckon up his host?
Go count a thousand o'er four hundred times.
Thou wouldst have said: "The sands and uplands seethe,
The wilderness is naught but ants and locusts."
With Sháh Naudar were seven score thousand men,
And certès they were warlike cavaliers.
Afrásiyáb surveyed them and despatched
By night a cameleer to bear Pashang
A letter: "The expected good hath come,
Naudar's whole host is as a quarry to us,
And Sám is dead. I feared none in Írán
But him. His death alloweth our revenge.
Zál is engaged upon the obsequies
And hath not foot or feather for the fight.
By this time Shamásás is in Nímrúz
Enthroned and crowned. Prompt action well advised
Is best for us; occasions will not wait."
V. 253 The camel spread its wings and went apace
Toward Pashang, that king of sunlight grace.

§ 4

How Bármán and Kubád fought together and how Kubád was slain

The van appeared in front of Dahistán
As morn rose o'er the hills. The armies camped
Two leagues apart in warlike pomp. A Turkman,
By name Bármán—one who bade sleepers wake—
Approached, spied out the whole Íránian host
And viewed the camp-enclosure of Naudar,
Returned, reported to his chief, and said:—
"How long must all our prowess be concealed?

Now if the king permit I will engage
Our foemen like a lion. They shall see
My skill and know no hero but myself."
"But if in this," said prudent Ighríras,
"Some misadventure should befall Bármán,
Our marchlords would be cowed, our folk discouraged.
Nay, choose we rather one of small account,
For whom we need not bite our nails and lips."
Then lowered Afrásiyáb, ashamed to hear
Such words, and frowning spake thus to Bármán:—
"Put on thine armour and string up thy bow;
It will not come to using teeth and nails."
Bármán pricked forth and shouted to Káran:—
"In all the army of the famed Naudar
Hast thou a man who will contend with me?"
Káran looked round upon his mighty men
For one to volunteer, but none responded
Save valiant old Kubád. The prudent chief
Was grieved and troubled when his brother spake,
And wept for wrath, and there was room for it V. 254
With that great host, that, with so many young
To fight, one old man only volunteered.
Vexed to the heart about Kubád, Káran
Addressed him thus in presence of the chiefs:—
"At thine age thou shouldst not contend with one
Fresh, ardent, young, and daring, like Bármán,
Who hath a lion's heart, and head sun-high.
Thou art an honoured chieftain, and the centre
Of counsel to our Sháh. If thy white locks
Grow red with blood our bravest will despair."
Mark his reply in presence of the troops:—
"The rolling sky hath given me enough.
Know, brother! that the body is for death;
My head and neck were meant to wear a helm.

My heart hath been in anguish from the time
Of blesséd Minúchihr until this day.
No mortal passeth into heaven alive,
Man is death's quarry; one the scimitar
Destroyeth mid the mellay, and the vulture
And lion tear his corpse; another's life
Is ended on his bed. Beyond all question
We must depart, and if I quit the world
My tall and lusty brother is still safe.
Make me a royal charnel in your love,
Give musk, rose-water, camphor for my head,
My body to the place of endless sleep.
This do, live peacefully, and trust in God."
V. 255 This said, he grasped his spear and sallied forth
Like some fierce elephant. Bármán exclaimed:—
"Now hath fate put thy head within my reach.
Well hadst thou held aloof, for time itself
Would have thy life."
"The sky," Kubád replied,
"Gave me my share long since, and he whose hour
Hath come will have to die where'er he be:
That time is not ill-timed at any time."
He spake and urged his sable steed, denying
His ardent heart all rest. The two contended
From dawn till shadows lengthened. In the end
The victory was Bármán's, who as he rode
Hurled at Kubád a dart which struck his hip
And pierced his belt. That ancient lion-heart
Fell headlong and so passed. Then with cheeks flushed
With pride and satisfaction came Bármán
Before 'Afrásiyáb, who gave him gifts
Unprecedented as from king to liege.
Káran the battle-lover, when Kubád
Was slain, drew out his army and attacked.

The two hosts seemed as 'twere two seas of Chín,
Thou wouldst have said: "Earth shaketh."
Then Káran
The warrior rushed forth and Garsíwaz,
Huge as an elephant, confronted him.
The chargers neighed, the sun and shining moon
Were hidden by the dust-clouds of the host,
Swords diamond-bright and spear-heads steeped in gore V. 256
Shone mid the dust—dust like a rainy cloud
Wherethrough vermilion droppeth from the sun,
A cloud whose marrow thrilled with tymbal-din,
While liquid crimson drenched the falchions' souls.
Where'er Káran urged on his steed the steel
Flashed like Ázargashasp, and thou hadst said:—
"His Diamond sheddeth Coral." Nay, shed souls.
Afrásiyáb beheld and led his troops
Against Káran, and with insatiate hearts
They fought till night rose c'er the hills, and then
Káran withdrew the host to Dahistán.
With heart distracted by his brother's death
He came to the pavilion of Naudar,
Who on beholding him let tears down fall
From weary eyelids that had seen no sleep,
And said: "Since Sám the horseman died my soul
Hath not grieved thus. Live thou for evermore,
And sunlike be the spirit of Kubád.
A day of joy and then a day of grief,
Such is the wont and fashion of the world!
No fostering will rescue us from death;
Earth's only cradle is the sepulchre."
"I have resigned to death," Káran replied,
"My doughty body even from my birth.
'Twas Farídún that put my helmet on
That I might tread the earth to avenge Íraj,
And hitherto I have not loosed my girdle, V. 257

Nor laid aside the sword of steel. My brother—
That sage—is dead. I too shall die in harness;
But be of cheer, Afrásiyáb to-day
Was straitened, and he called up his reserves.
He saw me with mine ox-head mace and eagerly
Attacked me; eye to eye I fronted him.
He used some magic and my keen eyes lost
Their vision, night came on and all was dark,
Mine arm was tired of striking. Thou hadst said:—
'The End hath come.' The sky was overcast,
And we were forced to quit the battlefield
Because the troops were spent and it was dark."
The opposing hosts reposed a while, and when
The morrow dawned began the strife again.

§ 5

How Afrásiyáb fought with Naudar the second Time

The Íránians drew up for battle royal,
And what with thundering drum and blaring trumpet
Thou wouldst have said: "The earth is tottering."
Afrásiyáb, when he beheld, arrayed
His army opposite. "The sun hath set,"
Thou wouldst have said, earth was so dark with dust
Of horsemen. Mid the war-cries none could tell
A mountain from a plain, host grappled host
And blood ran like a river where Káran
V. 258 Sought for the fray, and where Afrásiyáb
Towered till Naudar approached and challenged him.
They strove together, spear confused with spear;
No serpents ever writhed together so;
How could kings battle thus?
They fought till night
And then Afrásiyáb was conqueror,

For more were stricken on the Íránian side
And still the foemen's battle was unbroken.
The Íránians turned their faces helplessly,
Abandoning their camp upon the waste.
Naudar was grieved that fortune should besmirch
His crown with dust, and when the tymbals ceased
He sent for Tús, who came with Gustaham,
All sighs and grief. "What pain is in my heart!"
He cried, recalling what his dying sire
Foretold: "An army from Túrán and Chín
Will come against Írán, grieve thee and bring
Disaster on thy troops."
"The words are now
Fulfilled," he said, "the arrogant have triumphed;
But who e'er read in tales of famous men
Of any that led forth such Turkman hosts?
Go ye to Párs to fetch the women-folk
And bear them through the passes to Alburz.
Take unperceived the road to Ispahán,
Else ye will break our soldiers' hearts, inflicting V. 59
A second wound. Some haply of the seed
Of Farídún may scape of all our troops.
I know not if I shall behold you more
Because to-night we make our last attempt.
Have scouts out night and day to watch events;
If they give evil tidings of the host
And say: 'The Glory of the king of kings
Is dimmed,' grieve not too much at heart; high heaven,
Since it had being, hath been ever thus.
Time bringeth this to dust while that enjoyeth
A royal crown. Death, whether violent
Or natural, is one—a throb then peace."
Naudar with tears of blood embraced his sons.
The royal pair proceeded to depart,
But he remained and with a heavy heart.

§ 6

How Naudar fought with Afrásiyáb the third Time

The host reposed two days, but when the sun
Rose on the third the Sháh was forced to fight.
Then like a foaming sea Afrásiyáb;
Dashed at the army of Naudar, the war-cry
Rose from the camp-enclosures mid the din
Of trump and Indian bell, the tymbals sounded
Before the Sháh's tent, and the warriors donned
Their iron helmets. None had thought of sleep
Within the camp of great Afrásiyáb;
V. 260 All night they had made ready, sharpening
The swords and double-headed darts. The earth
Was filled by armoured men with heavy maces.
Káran was marshal of the central host
Whereto the Sháh and he were towers of strength.
The Sháh's left wing the hero Talímán
Claimed for himself, and bold Shápúr the right.
From morning till the sun had left the dome,
Hills, plains, and wastes were indistinguishable;
Thou wouldst have said: "The sword's heart is enlarged
And earth is groaning underneath the steeds."
But while the javelins put the earth in shade
Defeat drew ever nearer to Naudar,
And as his fortunes sank the Turkmans' rose.
Upon the side where bold Shápúr was stationed
The ranks were broken and the troops dispersed,
But he maintained his post till he was slain.
The Íránians' fortune turned away its head,
And many another chieftain of the host
Was killed or wounded on the battlefield.

Now when the monarch and Káran perceived
The stars averse, they fled before the foe
To Dahistán, and there maintained themselves,
Cut off from all outside it. Night and day
They fought in the approaches. Passed a while.
Now since Naudar had refuged in the hold,
Where horsemen could not act, Afrásiyáb
Made ready and despatched a force by night, V. 261
Bethought him of the chieftain Kurúkhán,
Of Wísa's race, and bade him lead them forth
Along the desert-route to Párs, for there
The Íránians' homes were situate, and men
In trouble make for home. Káran heard this
And, moved with jealousy and grieved at heart,
Went in as 'twere a leopard to Naudar
And said: "Behold how base Afrásiyáb
Is dealing with the monarch of Írán!
He hath despatched a countless host of troops
Against our warriors' women. Should he get them
Disaster will befall our men of name
And we shall hide our faces in disgrace;
So Kurúkhán must be attacked forthwith,
And by the leave of the victorious Sháh
I will pursue with speed. Thou hast a river,
Provisions, and right zealous warriors.
Stay thou; be not concerned. Thou canst defend
Thyself with ease, so play the lion's part,
For monarchs should be brave."
Naudar replied:—
"Not so, the host hath none like thee to lead them.
'Twas for our homes that Tús and Gustaham
Went forth at beat of drum, and they will reach
The women in good time, such is their speed,
And take the needful steps."
The mighty men

Went to the sleeping-chamber of the Sháh
V. 262 Where presently they sat and called for wine
To purge their hearts of sorrow for a while.
When Sháh Naudar was well bemused he went
Behind his curtains, meditating vengeance,
And those brave chiefs—the Íránian cavaliers—
Departed in disorder from the court
To assemble at the quarters of Káran,
With eyes like winter-clouds; with much debate,
They all agreed: "We must set out for Párs
Forthwith or else our wives and little ones
Will all be broken-hearted slaves, all captured
Without a struggle, and who then will wield
The spear upon the plain or rest in peace?"
Now when these three—Shídúsh, Kishwád, Káran—
Had taken counsel for the whole emprise,
And half the night had passed, they made them ready
To sally forth. At dawn with heavy hearts
They reached what men in those days called "White Castle."[1]
There found they Guzhdaham the castellan
Together with his watchful warriors
Beleaguered by Bármán, who held the road
With troops and elephants and valiant chiefs,
And erst had wrung the heart of brave Káran
Who, eager to avenge his brother's blood,
Assumed his mail, prepared his men for action,
V. 263 And made for Párs. The brave Bármán was ware
And like a lion met him on the way.
Now when Káran saw mid the dust of fight
That man of blood he grappled with his foe,
All lion-like, not giving time for ruse,
But closed at once, invoking God for succour,
And pierced the Turkman's girdle with a javelin

[1] See introductory note to the previous reign.

Through mail and buckle. From his charger's back
Bármán fell headlong, the bright orb of day
Turned dark to him, his army's heart was broken,
His soldiers fled. Káran the chieftain then
Went on toward Párs with all his valiant men.

§ 7

How Naudar was taken by Afrásiyáb

Naudar, on hearing that Káran had gone,
Sped after him, all instant to escape
The evil day, lest heaven should trample him.
Afrásiyáb gat tidings that Naudar
Had sought the waste, collected troops, and followed
As 'twere a lion. Drawing near he found
The foemen ready for a running fight,
And as he marched mused how to take the head
That wore the crown. They fought all night till noonday,
And earth was dark with warriors' dust. At length
The Sháh was taken with twelve hundred nobles;
Thou wouldst have said: "Their place on earth is void."
Strive as they might to flee they were ensnared
Within the net of bale. Afrásiyáb V. 264
Put into bonds the captured host and Sháh.
Though thou shouldst sit in conclave with the sky
Yet will its revolutions grind thee down.
It giveth majesty and throne and crown,
It giveth too despair and misery.
It playeth friend and foe, and proffereth thee,
At times a kernel and at times a shell;
It is a conjurer that knoweth well
The sleights of every form of jugglery.

Although thy head may touch the clouds, it must
Have in the end its place amid the dust.
Afrásiyáb gave orders: "Search," he said,
"The caves, the hills, the waters, and the waste
That fierce Káran may not elude our troops."
But hearing that Káran had gone to save
The women he was furious. "Let Bármán,"
He bade, "speed forth and lion-like pursue
Káran, and bring him me a prisoner."
They told the monarch how Káran had served
Bármán, and brought him from his steed to dust;
Whereat Afrásiyáb was sorely grieved,
Food, rest, and sleep were bitterness to him,
And thus he spake to Wísa: "Let the death
Of this thy son steel thine own heart, for when
V. 265 The son of Káwa warreth leopards shrink
Before his spear. Go with a valiant host
Well furnished, and take vengeance for the lost."[1]

§ 8

How Wísa found his Son that had been slain

So Wísa, chief of the Túránian troops,
Departed with a noble, vengeful army,
And saw before he overtook Káran
His loved son lying slain, his banner rent,
His kettledrums o'erturned, his shroud of blood
Like tulips, and his face like sandarach;
While warriors and chieftains of Túrán
Were flung in numbers with him on the route.
The sight grieved Wísa so that thou hadst said:—
"His heart is rent by anguish," while his eyes
Wept scalding tears. He sped to catch Káran.

[1] Reading with P.

Thus like a torrent Wísa rushed along
And shed calamity throughout the world.
"He marcheth on in triumph gloriously,"
Such was the news that reached Káran, who sent
His Arab horsemen forward to Nímrúz
And followed them himself—the Sun of earth.
Now when from Párs he reached the waste, a dust-cloud
Appeared upon his left, and from the dust
The sable flag emerged, while from the van
The Turkman chief led on his host. Both armies
Arrayed their ranks; the warriors sought the fray.
Then from the centre Wísa shouted, saying:— V. 266
"Gone to the winds are crown and throne of greatness.
All from Kannúj up to Kábulistán,
Ghaznín too, and Zábulistán, are ours:
Our throne is graven on their palaces,
Where wilt thou refuge since the Sháh is taken?"
The other said: "Káran am I, and cast
My blanket on the waters.[1] Neither fear
Nor any idle rumour sent me forth.
I marched to fight thy son, and having taken
Revenge on him will take it now on thee,
And show thee how brave warriors fight."
They urged
Their chargers on, the clarions blared, dust rose
To left and right and moon and sky waxed dim.
Men grappled eagerly and showered blood.
Káran and Wísa met once in the mellay,
But Wísa turned away and fled the field V. 267
Where many a chief had fallen, yet Káran
Pursued not. Wísa, broken by misfortune,
Appeared before Afrásiyáb in pain
And weeping for his son that had been slain.

[1] *I.e.*, I court danger.

§ 9

How Shamásás and Khazarwán invaded Zábulistán

The expedition from Irmán went forth
Against Zábul, and Shamásás advanced
Toward Sístán in haste, while Khazarwán,
With thirty thousand famous men—good swordsmen—
Marched warily as far as the Hirmund
With glaive and mace, and fortune at its height.
Now Zál was at the burial-place erecting
In pain and grief a charnel for his father,
While brave Mihráb, whose mind was on the alert,
Was in the city, and despatched an envoy
To Shamásás. When this man reached the camp
He gave his master's greetings, saying thus:—
"For ever may the monarch of Túrán
Continue bright of heart and wear the crown.
Zahhák the Arab was mine ancestor,
And little do I love mine overlord,
But by alliance have I purchased life
Because I saw no other course. At present
I dwell within the palace, ruling all
Zábulistán. When Zál went whelmed with grief
To bury Sám my heart rejoiced, and I
Will never see his face again. I ask
The famous paladin for time to send
Afrásiyáb a prudent cameleer;
'Twill shorten matters if he know my mind.
V. 268 I will despatch him fitting gifts besides
The tribute, and if he saith 'Come,' will stand
Before his throne, resign to him my realm,
And joy in him. I will not vex the paladin,
But send him every kind of hoarded wealth."

Thus one hand held back Shamásás and one
Was stretched for help. He sent a messenger
And said: "Fly! Ply thy feathers and thy pinions,
Announce to Zál what thou hast seen, and say:—
'Pause not to rub thy head but come at once,
For of the Turkman host two paladins,
Like leopard's claws, advanced to fight with me;
But when they were approaching the Hirmund
I put their feet in fetters of dínárs.
Now if thou waitest to draw breath but once
Our foes will have their will.'"
The envoy came
To Zál, whose heart forthwith was all a-flame.

§ 10

How Zál came to help Mihráb

Zál hearing this had the gold trappings placed
Upon his steed, and faring night and day
Rejoined his troops. Whenas he saw Mihráb
Unmoved and full of knowledge and good counsel,
He thought: "What cause have we to fear this host,
For Khazarwán is but a pinch of dust
To me?"
Then to Mihráb: "O man of prudence,
Approved in all! now will I go by night V. 269
And lay a hand upon the foe for blood.
They shall be ware that I am back again,
Back with full heart and ready to avenge."
He marked the stations of the hostile chiefs,
Then drew his bow amain and shot three arrows
Of poplar, bough-like, arching through the sky
In three directions, and a clamour followed.

When it was day the soldiers gathered round
And marked the arrows, saying: "They are Zál's!
None other shooteth with such shafts as these."
Cried Shamásás: "O Khazarwán, thou Lion!
Hadst thou not been remiss in fight, not dallied
So with Mihráb, his army and his treasure,
Zál had not troubled thee."
Then Khazarwán:—
"He is but one, not Áhriman or iron.
Fear not, for I will grapple him anon."
Whenas the bright sun crossed the vault were heard
Drums on the plain, and in the city sounds
Of tymbals, clarions, gongs, and Indian bells.
Zál donned his mail apace, bestrode his charger
As swift as dust, while all his warriors mounted
With vengeful thoughts and frowns upon their brows.
He led the army forth upon the plain,
Equipped with elephants and camp-enclosures,
Where host encountered host and made the waste
As 'twere a darksome mountain with the dust.
Then Khazarwán with mace and buckler rushed
v. 270 To counter Zál, and smote his glittering breast
A blow that brake his famed cuirass. When Zál
Withdrew the warriors of Kábulistán
Retreated, but brave Zál armed him afresh.
His head was wroth, his blood was up, he brandished
His father's mace, while Khazarwán advanced
To challenge fight, a roaring Lion he,
Before the host. Zál had no sooner raised
The reek of fight than Khazarwán was on him
As quick as dust, while Zál in fury charged
His foe, and brandishing the ox-like mace
Smote Khazarwán upon the head and made
The ground as 'twere a leopard's back with blood;

Then flung him down, trod on him, passed along
And led the army forward to the plain,
Inviting Shamásás to come and fight,
But Shamásás came not; his blood was chilled.
Zál next descried Kulbád amid the dust
And shouldered his steel mace. Thereon Kulbád,
Observing Zál with mace and scimitar,
Endeavoured to escape his foeman's sight,
But Zál the cavalier strung up his bow
And lightly aimed at him a poplar arrow,
Struck full upon the girdle of Kulbád—
A girdle that was wrought of links of steel—
And pinned him to the pummel through the loins.
His troops' hearts burned for him while Shamásás
Despaired, his face paled when those chiefs were slain,
And he and all his army in full flight
Dispersed like sheep upon a stormy day,
Pressed by the soldiers of Zábulistán
And by Mihráb. The field was such with corpses
That thou hadst said: "The troops are cramped for room."
The Turkmans fled toward Afrásiyáb,
Their mail unfastened and their girdles snapped.
When Shamásás had reached the open plain V. 271
Káran, the son of Káwa, came in sight
Returning from pursuing Wísa's host,
Whose noblest he had slain so easily.
The armies met together, Shamásás
Met with Káran, the lover of the fray,
Who knowing his antagonists, and why
They were retreating from Zábulistán,
Bade trumpets sound and occupied the road.
Thus host encountered host. The paladin
Said to his troops: "Ye men of noble name
And ardent soul! go battle with your spears,

And may ye rob the foe of life."
With cries
Of maddened elephants they seized their spears,
Which made a reed-bed of the battlefield
And veiled the sun and moon. He lightly slew
Those Turkman troops and flung them on the track,
Fell on the wounded and the prisoners,
And sent their dust up to the shining sun,
While Shamásás with certain men of might
Fled and escaped the murky dust of fight.

§ 11

How Naudar was slain by Afrásiyáb

News of the death of those famed warriors
Came to the Turkman king; his heart was pained,
His cheeks were wet with his heart's blood. He said:—
"Naudar is in my prison, yet my friends
Are vilely slaughtered thus! What can I do
But shed his blood and give new cause for feud?"
He was enraged and cried: "Where is Naudar,
For Wísa calleth for revenge on him?
V. 272 Bring him," he told an executioner,
"That I may teach him war."
Naudar on hearing
Knew that his time was come. A clamorous throng
Departed, bound his arms firm as a rock,
And haled him bare both head and foot, fordone,
In shameful plight before the Crocodile.
Full of impatience great Afrásiyáb
Looked out for him, and seeing him approach
Reminded him of their ancestral feud,
Began with Salm and Túr, and washed away
From heart and eyes the reverence due to kings.

"Thou hast deserved whatever ill may come,"
He said, called fiercely for a scimitar,
Smote Sháh Naudar upon the neck and flung
In foul contempt the body in the dust.
Thus passed that Memory of Sháh Minúchihr
And left Írán bereft of throne and crown.
O man of knowledge shrewd exceedingly!
Don not the whole robe of thy greed, for throne
And crown have seen already many an one
Like thee, and thou mayst hear their history.
If thou hast gained the object of thy lust
And appetite hath ceased, so strong before,
Why shouldst thou ask this gloomy mournful dust
To make thee miserable any more?
They haled the other captives forth in shame,
And asking quarter. Virtuous Ighríras
Saw this and anxiously besought the king:—
"To slay so many noble warriors
And horsemen in cold blood—mere prisoners
Disarmed—is base, and base where we should look V. 273
For magnanimity. 'Twere worthier far
To spare their lives. Commit them bound to me
And I will prison them within a cavern,
Well guarded. Prison will restore their wits;
But shed not blood."
At Ighríras' request,
Perceiving his distress and earnestness,
The monarch spared their lives, and bade men take
The captives to Sarí in shameful bonds.
This done he marched from Dahistán to Rai,
Hid earth beneath his cavaliers and made
His chargers sweat, assumed the royal crown,
Bestowed a liberal largess of dínárs,
And played as monarch of Írán his part
With thoughts of war and vengeance in his heart.

§ 12

How Zál had Tidings of the Death of Naudar

This news reached Gustaham and Tús: "The Grace
Of kingship is obscured. They have struck off
Remorselessly with trenchant scimitar
The head that wore the crown, and all is over."
Men tore their faces and plucked out their hair,
A cry of mourning went up from Írán,
The great put dust and earth upon their heads,
All eyes wept tears of blood, all robes were rent.
Men turned their faces toward Zábul; their tongues
Spake of the Sháh, their souls yearned for the Sháh.
They went to Zál in mourning and in pain,
With blood-stained cheeks and dust upon their heads.
They cried: "O good and valiant Sháh Naudar!
O great just monarch, wearer of the crown,
V. 274 The guardian of Írán, the prop of nobles,
The head of kings and monarch of the world!
Thy head is seeking for a crown from dust
And earth is savouring of the blood of Sháhs.
The grasses on these fields and fells are hanging
Their heads in shame before the sun while we
Ask vengeance, mourning as it were a father,
In whom the stock of Farídún survived,
While earth was servant to his horse's shoe.
Now him and all that famous troop have they
Beheaded shamefully, despitefully;
But we will draw our swords of watered steel,
Will go to seek revenge and slay the foe:
So arm ye and revive the ancient feud.
The heaven is surely with us in our grief;
Its eyes rain tears of blood for very ruth.

Do ye too fill your eyes with tears like those
And strip your bodies of their dainty dress,
For in revenge for kings it is not well
That eyes should stint their tears or hearts their rage."
The mournful multitude wept bitterly,
And burnt as though upon a raging fire,
While Zál rent all his raiment and sat down
With lamentable outcries in the dust.
He said: "My trenchant blade shall ne'er behold
Sheath till the Resurrection, my white charger
Shall be my throne, a spear mine only tree,
My place a stirrup and a dusky helm
The crown upon my head. There is no rest
Or slumber in this feud. No stream can match
The river of mine eyes. Oh! may the soul
Of great Naudar shine bright amid the mighty,
And may the Lord of earth bestow on you
A soul for Faith and duty. All of us
Are born to die; it is our lot whereto
We yield our necks."
Now when the captives heard:—
"The Iránians are upon the march for vengeance, V. 275
They send out cameleers on every side,
Have gathered countless troops and have renounced
Home and delights," they neither ate nor slept,
Such was their terror of Afrásiyáb.
A message from them came to Ighríras:—
"O man of mighty purpose, famous chief!
We are thy slaves in all, and by thy word
We live. Zál, as thou knowest, is at home
And acting with the monarch of Kábul.
Men like Barzín, Káran the warrior,
Kharrád, and that host-shatterer Kishwád,
Are men of might with hands that reach afar
And will not keep their clutches off Irán.

Now when these warriors wheel about us here
And brandish their sharp lances in his sight
The great Afrásiyáb will be enraged,
His heart will be inflamed against his captives,
And for his crown's sake he will bring to dust
The heads of all our blameless company.
If prudent Ighríras see fit to free us
We will disperse, praise him before the great
And make thanksgiving unto God for him."
Wise Ighríras replied: "Such skilleth not;
'Twere a foe's act; this human Áhriman
Would be incensed. I will not take other order
So that my brother may not turn upon me
In vengeance. If now Zál is keen for war
V. 276 And will advance to fight us at Sarí
I will deliver you to him, myself
Evacuate Ámul, forbear to fight
And bring to infamy my honoured head."
At this reply the nobles of Írán
Bent to the ground, and full of praise for him
Despatched a courier from Sarí with speed
To Zál, the son of Sám. The message ran:—
"Our God hath pitied us; wise Ighríras
Is now our friend. This is the pact between us:
If only two Íránian warriors
Shall come and offer fight that noble man,
Who walketh fortune's path, will quit Ámul
For Rai, and so some one of us may scape
The Dragon's clutch."
The courier reached Zábul
And made the glad news known to Zál, who called
The nobles, told them all, then said: "My friends,
Pards of the fray and winners of renown!
Who is the warrior of princely heart,
All black with courage, who will raise his neck

To touch the sun by undertaking this?"
Kishwád accepting struck his breast and said:—
"My hand is ready for an act so just."
The glorious Zál approved him, saying thus:—
"Live happily while months and years endure."
So from Zábul a troop of warriors
Intent on war set face toward Ámul.
When they had journeyed for a stage or two
The tidings came to Ighríras their friend,
Who blew the brazen trumpets, marched away V. 277
His troops and left the captives at Sarí.
When fortunate Kishwád arrived he found
The key to loose their bonds, provided steeds,
And from Ámul sped toward Zábul. When Zál
Was told: "Kishwád is coming back in triumph,"
He gave a largess to the mendicants,
The robe that he was wearing to the messenger,
And when Kishwád approached went out to meet him
In state, while weeping tears of joy for those
That had been captive in the Lion's clutch,
And then with dust upon his head wept tears
Of grief o'er famed Naudar. He took the loved ones
Within the city, gave them palaces,
And they became as when Naudar was king,
Possessed of crowns and thrones and diadems,
While Zál distributed his treasure-store
Until the army could desire no more.

§ 13

How Ighríras was slain by his Brother

When Ighríras went from Ámul to Rai
The king asked: "Wherefore hast thou acted thus?
Why hast thou mingled colocynth with honey?

Did I not bid thee: 'Slay these evil men;
It will be folly to imprison them?'
The warrior's head is not concerned with statecraft,
His fame is gained upon the battlefield;
Nor should the soldier tread the path of wisdom,
For wisdom never mingleth with revenge."
"Tears and compassion are not wholly needless,"
V. 278 He answered. "When thou hast the power to harm
Fear God and do it not, for crown and girdle
See many like thee but are no man's own
For ever."
Hearing this Afrásiyáb
Was silenced, for the one was full of fire,
The other wise; and how should wisdom fit
Dívs' heads? At his reply the chieftain raging,
Like elephant gone mad, drew forth his scimitar
And cut his brother down; that man of wisdom
And goodness passed away. Zál heard, and said:—
"Now shall the fortune of Afrásiyáb
Be darkened and his throne laid waste."
He blew
The trumpets, bound the tymbals on, arrayed
The army like the eye of chanticleer
And went toward Párs, in anger and revenge,
With troops that stretched from sea to sea, and darkened
The sun and moon with dust. Afrásiyáb,
On hearing Zál's design, marched forth his host
Toward Khár of Rai, drew up and took his stand.
The outposts were engaged both day and night;
Thou wouldst have said: "The world hath but one hue."
V. 279 Both hosts lost many a gallant man of mark.
'Twas thus until two sennights passed away,
And horse and foot were weary of the fray.

IX

ZAV, THE SON OF TAHMÁSP

HE REIGNED FIVE YEARS

ARGUMENT

After the execution of Naudar the throne remains for a while vacant, his sons Tús and Gustaham being considered unworthy to succeed. Zav, by the advice of Zál, is made Sháh. The war against Afrásiyáb continues, and the sufferings of both armies are aggravated by drought and consequent famine. Both sides become eager for peace, which is successfully negotiated, rain falls and Zav dies.

NOTE

Zav is described in the Sháhnáma as the son of Tahmásp and descended from the race of Farídún. In the Bundahish he is said to be the grandson of Naudar.[1] Zav is mentioned in the Zandavasta: "We worship the Fravashi (*i.e.* the immortal principle) of the holy Uzava, the son of Túmáspa."[2]

The passing over of Tús and Gustaham, the sons of Naudar, on the express ground of their unfitness, as not being possessed of the divine Grace of sovereignty, seems to find its justification in what we learn of their characters later on, at all events in the case of Tús, who is described as being hot-headed, revengeful, and a brave but unsuccessful general. Gustaham almost drops out of the poem and his place is taken by another hero of the same name, Gustaham the son of Gazhdaham—the castellan of the White Castle.

Tús is represented as always resentful of the slight put upon him; it induces him to oppose the accession of Kai Khusrau,

[1] WPT, i. 136.

[2] DZA, ii. 221.

and subsequently to make the unprovoked attack which results in the death of Farúd, that Sháh's brother.

In the terms of the treaty of peace between Zav and Afrásiyáb, which make the Jíhún the boundary between Írán and Túrán, we have the beginning of much geographical confusion in the Sháhnáma. The Aras was really meant.[1]

Drought and famine are frequent phenomena in the table-land of Írán.

§ 1

Zav is elected Sháh

One night as Zál sat speaking to his chiefs
And retinue about Afrásiyáb,
He said: "Although our paladins possess
Unsleeping fortune and enlightened minds
We need a Sháh, one of the royal race,
Skilled in the lore of eld. The host resembleth
A ship whereto the throne is wind and sail.
Oh! had but Tús and Gustaham the Grace. . . .
We lack not troops, but men, however noble,
That have not prudence, merit not the crown
And throne. We need a Sháh of puissant fortune,
A man of Grace through whose words wisdom shineth."
They found none of the seed of Farídún
But Zav, son of Tahmásp, with monarch's might
And hero's worth to grace the lofty throne.
Káran took with a gallant company
The joyful news to Zav: "In thee reviveth
v. 280 The crown of Farídún. Zál and the troops
Acclaim thee as the Sháh, O worthy one!"
On an auspicious day fair-fortuned Zav
Came and acceded to the lofty throne.
The mighty praised him, showering offerings;
Zál too did homage. Five years passed away

[1] See Introd. p. 71.

While Zav, a wise old man, sat on the throne
And judged and lavished till the world grew young.
He kept his soldiers back from evil ways,
Wrapped up himself in communings with God.
None dared to rob or slay, but after him
Men saw no lack of slaughter. There was a famine,
There was not dew or rain, the ground and herbs
Were parched, and bread was worth its weight in drachms.
The hosts had faced each other for five months,
Engaged in fierce encounters day by day
As fitteth chiefs and heroes, but that famine
Left them resourceless, wasted woof and warp,
And all confessed: "We are ourselves to blame,"
While wails and cries for help rose from both hosts.
At length an envoy came to Zav and said:—
"It is our own fault that this Wayside Inn
Affordeth naught but travail, care, and anguish.
Come let us share the earth and bless each other."
They gave up thoughts of war for famine pressed,
Agreed to drop the ancient feud, to share
The world according to just precedent[1] V. 281
And put all bygones out of memory.
The portion of Írán both near and far
'Twixt the Jíhún and marches of Túrán,
And so along toward Khutan and Chín,
Was given to the Turkmans as their kingdom,
While Zál abandoned all the nomad tribes.
Such was the sharing, such the Turkmans' bounds.
Then Zav led forth his host to go to Párs,
Old as he was he made earth young again;
While Zál departed for Zábulistán
And men received them both with open arms.
The roar of thunder filled the mountain-tops

[1] Probably referring to Faridún's settlement.

And earth recovered colour, scent, and beauty:
It was as 'twere a youthful bride, arrayed
In fountains, pleasances, and rivulets,
For fortune would be neither dark nor hard
If man had not the temper of a pard.
Zál called the chiefs and offered thanks to God,
Who had converted scarcity to plenty,
Men set up feasting-places everywhere
And banished feud and cursing from their hearts.
Thus for five years men knew not wrong or travail,
Yet verily the world grew sick of justice
And longed to be within the Lion's claws.
Now when he reached his sixth and eightieth year
That sun-like ruler's leaf began to sear,
The Íránians' fortune halted and the day
Of Zav, the righteous worldlord, passed away.

X

GARSHÁSP

HIS REIGN WAS NINE YEARS

ARGUMENT

On the death of Zav his son Garshásp succeeds to the throne, and Afrásiyáb seizes the opportunity to renew the war. Garshásp himself dies, and the Íránians being hard pressed appeal to Zál, who promises that his son Rustam shall come to their assistance. The poet then tells how Zál gave Sám's mace to Rustam, how the latter won his charger Rakhsh, and how Zál led the host against Afrásiyáb, and sent Rustam to fetch Kai Kubád from Mount Alburz to be Sháh in succession to Garshásp.

NOTE

In the summary in the Dínkard of the lost Kitradád Nask mention is made of Keresásp, who is placed between Kai Kubád and Kai Káús.[1] Keresásp appears there to be identical with the great hero, of whom an account has been given in the introductory note to Farídún, and if so apparently we must identify Garshásp, the tenth Sháh, with him as well. In the Sháhnáma, however, he is a mere *nominis umbra*, and Firdausí places him before Kai Kubád, the first Sháh of the Kaiánian dynasty, and makes him the son of the preceding Sháh Zav and the last of the Pishdádians. His personality had already, as we have seen in the note above referred to, become split up, and his reign is a blank so far as he is concerned.

The reader will note Rustam's reference to bishops acting as castellans.[2] In the wars between the Eastern Roman Empire and

[1] WPT, iv. 28.

[2] p. 378.

the Sásánians, bishops and other ecclesiastics often took a very important part in the defence of besieged cities. Thus S. James, the Bishop of Edessa, took a leading part in several successful defences of Nisibis against Sapor II.[1] The fact of the church militant thus became impressed on the Eastern mind, and by an anachronism not uncommon with him, Firdausí transfers the usages of later times to earlier ages. The reader will note too the vision of the divine Grace of kingship which prepared Kai Kubád for his accession to the throne. It appeared again visibly in the shape of a ram before the accession of Ardshír Pápakán, the first Sháh of the Sásánian dynasty. When it quitted Yima it flew away in the shape of a bird.[2]

§ I

How Garshásp succeeded to the Throne and died, and how Afrásiyáb invaded Írán

V. 282 Zav had a puissant son by name Garshásp
Who sat upon the throne and donned the crown.
He ruled the world with majesty and Grace,
But tidings reached the Turkmans: "Zav hath gone
And left an empty throne."
Afrásiyáb
Sent up the war-cry, launched his ships and made
For Khár of Rai, but no one brought to him
A greeting from Pashang, whose head was filled
With hate, his heart with strife. All wild with grief
For Ighríras, of throne and crown he recked not,
Would never look upon Afrásiyáb
And let the shining sword grow dull with rust;
Albeit messengers were sent to him
Month after month, but he denied himself,
And said: "Whatever prince were on the throne
A friend like Ighríras would profit him,
But thou art one to shed a brother's blood
And flee before the nursling of a fowl.

[1] RSM, 155–164.

[2] See introductory note to Jamshíd.

I sent thee forth to battle with the foe
And thou hast slain thy brother! I disown thee:
Thou shalt not look upon my face again."
Thus matters fared awhile; at length the tree
Of bale bore colocynth. 'Twas in the year
Wherein Garshásp the son of Zav departed
That evil showed itself, for tidings reached
All ears: "The throne of king of kings is void." V 283
There came a message to Afrásiyáb—
A stone flung by Pashang: "Cross the Jíhún
And tarry not until yon throne be filled."
Between Jíhún and plain of Sipanjáb
Afrásiyáb arrayed his armaments,
And thou hadst said: "Earth is a turning sky
Where Indian swords are shedding souls for rain."
So sped that splendid army forth to war.
"There is a claimant for the throne of might,"
Such tidings reached Írán. The throne was void,
The outlook dark. Anon the streets and quarters
Were all astir, cries rose from all the land
And men turned toward Zábul. The world was filled
With strife and folk spake bitterly to Zál:—
"Thy handling of the world hath been too lax.
Since thou hast held Sám's place as paladin
Our minds have not been joyful for a day.
When Zav departed and his son was Sháh
The hands of evil men were kept from ill.
Now seeing that Garshásp hath passed away
The world is Sháhless and the army chiefless.
A host hath crossed Jíhún, men cannot see
The sun for dust. If any shift thou knowest
Use it, because Afrásiyáb approacheth."
Zál answered: "Since I girt the belt of manhood
No rider like me hath bestridden steed, V. 284
None hath essayed to wield my sword and mace,

And horsemen showed their cruppers, not their reins,
When I appeared. I have fought night and day
And all my life have dreaded growing old.
At length my back is bent, I wield no more
A falchion of Kábul; yet God be praised
That from my root a glorious shoot hath sprung,
Whose head will reach the sky, and thou shalt see
It grow in valour, Rustam being now
A straight-stemmed Cypress whom the crown of greatness
Becometh well; but he must have a charger;
These Arab horses will not do for him.
I will seek out some elephantine steed,
Wherever there are herds, and say to Rustam:—
'Wilt thou consent, consent with all thy heart
To gird thy loins to execute revenge
Upon the offspring of Zádsham?'"

Írán
Was glad of heart and blithe of face as Zál
Sent camel-posts to every quarter, armed
His cavaliers, and said to Rustam thus:—
"Mine elephantine son, a whole head taller
Than other men! a work of toil is toward
To break thy slumbers, quiet, and delights.
Thou art not yet of age to fight, my son!
But what of that? This is no time for feasting.
Yet with the scent of milk upon thy lips,
And with thy heart all set on sports and pleasures,
How shall I send thee to the battlefield
Against the Lions and the mighty men?
Now for thine answer, and may majesty
And goodness be thy mates."

Then Rustam thus:—
"O noble prince, ambitious of renown!
V. 285 Good sooth thou hast forgotten how I showed

My courage publicly. The paladin
Hath surely heard of the fierce elephant,
And Mount Sipand, and I shall lose my fame
If now I tremble at Afrásiyáb.
This is the time for fight and not for flight.
The overthrow of Lions, the pursuit
Of war, renown, and battle, fashion heroes;
But 'tis not so with women; their concern
Is food and sleep."

Zál said: "O gallant youth,
The chief of princes and the warriors' stay!
My heart rejoiceth when I hear thee speak
Of that white elephant and Mount Sipand,
For truly since that fight was won with ease
Why fear I for thee now? Afrásiyáb
And his designs deprive me of my sleep,
Yet can I send thee to contend with one
Who is a gallant king and loveth battle?
Now is thy time for feasts and twanging harps,
For quaffing wine, and tales of warlike deeds;
'Tis not thy time for warfare, fame, and strife,
Or sending up the earth's dust to the moon."

He said: "I am not one for ease and revel.
'Twere base to pamper in luxuriousness
Such arms as these, and these long hands of mine.
What though the battlefield and fight be hard
God and victorious fortune are mine aids.
In battle thou shalt mark me how I go
Upon my ruddy charger through the blood,
And I will carry in my hand a cloud[1]
That is of watered hue but raineth gore,
While from the substance of it flasheth fire:
Its head shall bruise the brains of elephants,
My quiver when I clothe myself in mail

[1] *I.e.*, a mace of steel.

Shall shock the world, and all the fortresses
V. 286 That shall withstand mine iron mace's blows,
My breast and arms and neck, need never fear
An arbalist or catapult, or want
A bishop for their castellan. The rocks
Shall redden to their cores when I advance
My lance in fight. I need a steed hill-high
Caught by my lasso, up to weight like mine
In war, and not impatient of restraint.
I need a mace too like a mountain-crag,
For hosts will come against me from Túrán,
And when they come, though I should fight unaided,
Their blood shall rain upon the battlefield."
The paladin was moved, and thou hadst said,
"He will pour out his soul." He thus replied:—
"O tired of ease and revel! I will bring thee
The mace of Sám the cavalier, preserved
In memory of him, wherewith thou slewest
The elephant. Live ever, paladin!"
Zál ordered: "Bring the mace employed by Sám
In his campaign against Mázandarán
V. 287 To this famed paladin that he may take
Our foemen's breath away."
When Rustam saw it
He smiled with joy, called blessings down on Zál,
And said: "Thou art the chief of paladins;
But now, to bear my person, mace, and Grace,
I need a steed."
Zál mused at what he said
And oft invoked God's blessing on his head.

§ 2.

How Rustam caught Rakhsh

When Zál had gathered all his herds of horses,
And many from Kábul, the herdsmen drove them

Past Rustam, calling out the royal brands.
Whenever Rustam caught a steed he pressed
Its back until its belly reached the ground.
At length a herd of piebald steeds sped by,
Among them a grey mare short-legged and fleet,
With lion's chest and ears like two steel daggers,
Her breast and shoulder full and barrel fine.
Behind her came a colt as tall as she,
His buttocks and his breast as broad as hers,
Dark-eyed and tapering—a piebald bay
With belly hard and jet-black, hoofs of steel,
His whole form beautiful, and spotted roan
Like roses spread upon a ground of saffron.
He could discern the tiny emmet's foot
Upon black cloth at night two leagues away,
Had elephantine strength with camel's stature, V. 288
And pluck of lions bred on Mount Bístún.
Now Rustam gazing on the mare observed
That elephantine colt, and coiled his lasso
To catch it, but an ancient herdsman cried:—
"O chief! forbear to take another's charger."
"Whose?" Rustam asked. "The thighs have not been branded."
The herdsman answered: "Never mind his brand;
There are all kinds of rumours as to him.
We call him Rakhsh. He is a piebald bay,
As good as water and as bright as fire.
We call him 'Rustam's Rakhsh,' but know of none
To master him. He hath been fit to saddle
These three years. All the nobles have observed him,
But at the sight of noose and cavalier
The dam is like a lion. We cannot tell,
O chief of paladins! the reason why,
But as a prudent man forbear to fight
A Dragon such as this, for when the mare

Is in the fighting humour she will rend
The hearts of lions and the hides of pards."
The old man's sayings opened Rustam's eyes,
He cast his royal lasso and entangled
The piebald's head. Then like a furious elephant
The dam advanced as she would tear off Rustam's,
Who roared as savage lions roar and scared her,
Then with one buffet on the withers sent her
All trembling to the ground. She rose, sprang back,
Then turned and joined the herd, while mighty Rustam
Stood firm and drew the lasso tighter still,
And laid his hand upon the bay colt's back
V. 289 Which gave not; thou hadst said: "It is not felt."
The hero thought: "This is the mount for me;
Now I can act."
He mounted swift as wind,
The ruddy steed sped with him. He inquired:—
"What is this Dragon's price or who can tell it?"
"If thou art Rustam," said the herd, "redress
Írán upon his back. Its broad champaign
Shall be his price; then thou wilt right the world."
The hero's lips grew coral-like with smiles;
He said: "All good is God's."
Bent on revenge
He saddled ruddy Rakhsh, and giving him
The rein observed his courage, strength, and blood,
And that he could bear rider, arms, and mail.
The piebald grew so precious that at night
They burned wild rue to right and left of him
For fear of harm. "They practise sorcery,"
Thou wouldst have said. In fight no deer was swifter.
He was soft-mouthed, foam-scattering, light in hand,
With rounded buttocks, clever, and well paced.
The gallant rider and his new-found steed
Made Zál's heart joyful as the jocund spring.

He oped his treasury-door, gave out dínárs,
Nor recked of day or morrow. When he mounted
His elephant and dropped a ball the sound
Made by the cup was heard for miles around.

§ 3

How Zál led the Host against Afrásiyáb

There was a noise of drums and clarions,
Of mighty elephants and Indian gongs;
'Twas Resurrection in Zábulistán
And earth called loudly to the dead: "Arise!"
A host departed from Zábul like lions;
All hands were bathed in blood. In front came Rustam v. 290
As paladin, then veteran warriors.
The troops so spread o'er passes, plains, and dales
That ravens had not room to fly, while tymbals
Beat everywhere and tumult filled the world
As at that time of roses Zál led forth
The army from Zábul. Afrásiyáb
Thereat arose from banquet, rest, and slumber,
And marched toward Khár of Rai along the meadows
Among their streams and reeds. The Iránian host
Fared o'er the desert to the scene of war,
And when the armies were two leagues apart
Zál called the veterans, and thus harangued them:—
"Ye men of wisdom, well approven warriors!
We have arrayed us here an ample host
And with advantages; yet with no Sháh
Upon the throne our plants want rede, our toils
Lack purpose, and our troops a head. When Zav
Was on the throne new glory ever came,
And now we need a Sháh of royal seed

To gird him there. An archimage hath told me
Of valiant Kai Kubád of royal stature,
A future Sháh of Farídún's own line
In whom Grace, height, and lawful claims combine."

§ 4

How Rustam brought Kai Kubád from Mount Alburz

Then glorious Zál spake unto Rustam, saying:—
"Bestir thyself, take up thy mace, select
V. 291 The escort, go with speed to mount Alburz,
Do homage unto Kai Kubád, but stay not
With him, be back within two sennights, sleep not,
But late and early hurry on and tell him:—
'The soldiers long, and deck the throne, for thee.
We see none fitted for the royal crown,
O monarch, our defender! but thyself.'"
When Zál had spoken matchless Rustam swept
The ground with his eyelashes, joyfully
Got on the back of Rakhsh, and proudly rode
In quest of Kai Kubád. A Turkman outpost
Held the road strongly; but he charged the foe
As champion of the host with his brave troops,
Armed with the ox-head mace. He brandished it
And towering in his wrath struck out and raised
His battle-cry. The Turkmans' hearts all failed,
His arm laid many low. They strove with him,
But had to flee the battle in the end.
With broken hearts and tearful eyes they turned
Back to Afrásiyáb, and told him all.
He sorrowed at their case, called one Kulún,
A gallant Turkman warrior full of craft,
And said to him: "Choose horsemen from the host,

Go thou too to the palace of the king,
Be careful, prudent, and courageous,
And specially keep watch with diligence;
The Íránians are human Áhrimans V. 292
And fall on outposts unawares."

Kulún
Departed from the royal camp with guides
To bar the road against the noble foe,
With warriors and lusty elephants.

Now Rustam the elect and brave marched on
Toward the new Sháh, and when within a mile
Of mount Alburz perceived a splendid seat
With running water and abundant trees—
The home for youth. Upon a river's bank
Was set a throne besprinkled with rose-water
And purest musk. A young man like the moon
Was seated on the throne beneath the shade,
While many paladins with girded loins
Stood ranked as is the custom of the great,
And formed a court well fitted for a Sháh,
Like Paradise in form and hue. On seeing
The paladin approach they went to greet him
And said: "Pass not, O famous paladin!
We are the hosts and thou shalt be our guest.
Dismount that we may join in jollity,
And pledge thee, famous warrior! in wine."

But he replied: "Exalted, noble chiefs!
I must to mount Alburz upon affairs
Of moment, and not loiter in my task.
I have much work to do, the Íránian marches
Are full of foes, all households weep and mourn,
I must not revel while the throne is void."

They said: "If thou art hasting to Alburz
Be pleased to say of whom thou art in quest, V. 293
For we who revel here are cavaliers

From that blest land, and we will be thy guides
And make friends on the way."
He thus replied:—
"The Sháh is there, a holy man and noble.
His name is Kai Kubád, sprung from the seed
Of Farídún the just and prosperous.
Direct me to him if ye wot of him."
The leader said: "I wot of Kai Kubád.
If thou wilt enter and delight our hearts
I will direct thee and describe the man."
The peerless Rustam hearing this dismounted
Like wind, and hurried to the water's edge,
To where the folk were seated in the shade.
The youth sat down upon the throne of gold
And taking Rustam's hand within his own
Filled up and drained a goblet "To the Free!"
Then handed it to Rustam, saying thus:—
"Thou askest me, O famous warrior!
About Kubád, whence knowest thou his name?"
Said Rustam: "From the paladin I come
With joyful news. The chiefs have decked the throne
And called on Kai Kubád to be the Sháh.
My sire, the chief whom men call Zál, said thus:—
'Go with an escort unto mount Alburz,
Find valiant Kai Kubád and homage him,
V. 294 Yet tarry not, but say: "The warriors call thee
And have prepared the throne."' If thou hast tidings
Give them and speed him to the sovereign power."
The gallant stripling, smiling, answered: "I
Am Kai Kubád and sprung from Farídún,
I know my lineage from sire to sire."
When Rustam heard he bowed, rose from his seat
Of gold to do obeisance, and thus spake:—
"O ruler of the rulers of the world,
The shelter of the brave and stay of chiefs!

Now let Írán's throne wait upon thy will,
Great elephants be taken in thy toils.
Thy right seat is the throne of king of kings;
May Grace and glory be thine own! I bring
A greeting for the king of earth from Zál,
The chieftain and the valiant paladin.
If now the Sháh shall bid his slave to speak
I will acquit me of the chieftain's message."
Brave Kai Kubád rose from his seat, intent
Upon the speaker's words, while peerless Rustam
Discharged his embassage. With throbbing heart
The young prince said: "Bring me a cup of wine,"
And drank to Rustam's health, who likewise drained
A goblet to the monarch's life, and said:—
"Thou mindest me of glorious Farídún"
(For Rustam was rejoiced at seeing him),
"Not for an instant may the world lack thee,
The throne of kingship, or the royal crown."
The instruments struck up, great was the joy,
The grief was small, the ruddy wine went round
And flushed the youthful Sháh, who said to Rustam:— V. 295
"Mine ardent soul in sleep saw two white hawks
Approaching from Írán, and bringing with them
A crown bright as the sun. They came to me
With dainty and caressing airs and set it
Upon my head. I wakened full of hope
Because of that bright crown and those white hawks,
And made a court here such as kings would hold,
As thou perceivest, by the river-side.
Like those white hawks hath matchless Rustam come
With news that I shall wear the warriors' crown."
When Rustam heard thereof he said: "Thy dream
Had a prophetic source. Now let us rise
And journey to Írán and to the chiefs."
Then Kai Kubád rose swift as fire and mounted V. 296

His steed, while Rustam girt his loins like wind
And journeyed proudly with him. Night and day
He travelled till he reached the Turkman outposts,
When bold Kulún, ware of his coming, marched
To meet and fight with him. The Sháh thereat
Was fain to put his battle in array,
But mighty Rustam said to him: "O Sháh!
'Tis not a fight for thee, they will not stand
Against my battleax and barded Rakhsh;
My heart and arm and mace are help enough;
I ask but God's protection. With a hand
Like mine and ruddy Rakhsh to carry me
Who will confront my mace and scimitar?"
He spake, spurred on and with a single blow
Threw one and hurled another at a third
Whose brains ran down his nostrils. Those strong hands
Unhorsed the foe and dashed them to the ground,
And in their fall brake heads and necks and backs.
Kulún beheld this dív escaped from bonds
With mace in hand and lasso at his saddle,
Charged him like wind and thrusting with his spear
Brake through some fastenings of his mail, but Rustam,
What while his foe was lost in wonderment,
Seized on the spear and wrenched it from Kulún,
Then roared like thunder from the mountain-tops,
Speared him and having raised him from his seat
Put down the spear's butt to the ground.[1] Kulún
Was like a spitted bird in sight of all.
The victor rode Rakhsh over him, and trod him
V. 297 To death. The Turkman horsemen turned to flee

[1] A similar story is told of a Lombard champion who with his great lance (contus) pierced and lifted from the saddle a Byzantine cavalier and bore him aloft wriggling on the weapon's point. (Oman, "A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages," p. 48.)

And left Kulún upon the field. His troops
Fled in dismay from Rustam. In an instant
Their fortune was o'erthrown. He passed the outposts
And hastened toward the hills. The paladin
Alighted at a place with grass and water
Till night had come and he had furnished robes
Fit for a paladin, a royal steed
And crown, then introduced the Sháh to Zál
Unnoticed. For a week they sat in conclave
But kept their movements secret. All agreed:—
"Kubád hath not his peer in all the world."
For seven days they revelled with Kubád,
Upon the eighth hung up the crown on high
And 'neath it decked the throne of ivory.

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[1] Properly speaking Zábulistán is the name of the hilly country about the upper waters of the Helmund, while Nímrúz and Sístán are synonymous names for the low-lying lands into which its waters descend, but Firdausí does not seem to make any such distinction.

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[1] See note, p. 396.

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[1] See note, p. 396.

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